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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

Christmas with Mrs Thatcher

There will be a turkey this year, as usual, prepared by her own fair hand. Sources close to the Leader of the Opposition have indicated that a goose is considered too rich. There will, however, be all the trimmings, and we may imagine that the occasion will be festive and relaxed. What does Mrs Thatcher look like when she relaxes? We do not know. Having studied her carefully over the last twelve months, we have rarely felt that we have caught her off her guard. Have we written that Mrs Thatcher gave 'a broad, friendly grin'? Or have we said: 'Mrs T, relaxing after a hard day at the Commons, put her feet up on the table, took a swig from a can of Fosters, and lit up a small cheroot'?

No, we have not. Such smiles as we have been vouchsafed are of a quality peculiar to Mrs T: most people smile with their mouth, but *she* smiles with her eyes and the upper part of her face; the mouth does open slightly, but it is not the major motive force in the expression. Mrs T never seems to talk through a smile. She talks, she finishes a phrase, and then she smiles, as if to punctuate her remarks. She seems unwilling to allow her face to do too many things at once. She keeps a tight control.

And yet there are times when she must relax. She has found, over the last year particularly, that in order to maintain maximum efficiency she must make time for repose. She must plan her week so that there is some spare capacity in case of an emergency. She must stay on top form. It is rare for her to hit the hay before one in the morning; consequently she rises at an hour she considers rather late – seven-thirty.

Her schedule is fuller now than when she was at Education (this seems slightly to surprise her) but she does not necessarily expect that it would be even fuller in Downing Street. She admires the example of Macmillan, and would like to make sure that, with the right team, a team she could trust, responsibility would be delegated as much as possible. She is not like the little red hen in the children's book, saying: 'Very well then, I'll do it myself.' Indeed she seems to have a very strong sense of her own limitations.

So, if she is relaxing with her family over Christmas lunch, it is unlikely that she will spend much time cogitating about the past year, and its successes and failures. Let us do so on her behalf. The year began and ended with a four-day debate on devolution. It contained great stretches in which the Tory Party was completely eclipsed by the drama of events: the resignation of Wilson, the ensuing flapdoodle over the succession, the slow and painful crucifixion of Jeremy Thorpe – these were moments when Mrs T had leisure to twiddle her thumbs. (Although there was a moment, a brief moment, when she apparently thought that the resignation of Wilson was in fact the signal for a general election.) She is now, and it is odd to think of it, the most experienced of the major party leaders.

The minus marks are comparatively few. Many Tories in the country at large will wish that their party had approached the latest devolution debate in a more united spirit. The bolshiness of Edward Heath and the resignation of the Scottish spokesmen were awkward reminders of a divided party. And yet in private Mrs T is not unduly perturbed. So the Tory Party is divided. Is not Labour also divided? And is not the Labour rebellion larger than that among the Tories (and necessarily more embarrassing)? As for Heath, one doubts whether his successor can be too worried about his present posings as leader of the Third Force: secret lunches with David Steel are one thing, a national government is quite another. There will be no national government as long as the Conservative Party is capable of taking over from Labour.

Is it? The polls would seem to indicate that the electorate thinks so. The by-elections, the great plusses of Mrs T's year, could hardly be more encouraging (Workington is the one her mind fixes upon as the evidence of real disaffection among traditional Labour voters). Soundings in the party at large would indicate a much greater satisfaction with the Thatcher team than there was at the beginning of the year. She still needs a chancellor, but otherwise she is working steadily towards the formation of her own, distinctively Thatcherite, right-wing front bench, to take over when the time comes.

And under what circumstances will it come? In Mrs T's view, Labour will crumble from power – crumble is the word she emphasises. They will become exhausted, lose their nerve, paint themselves into a corner, and *crumble*. In which case, the question most urgently arises as to whether the Tories can learn to live with organised labour. It is a question Mrs Thatcher hopes will be raised, since she believes she has the answer. Remember the alacrity with which, at the time of the Brighton conference, she took up the Callaghan threat of rioting in the streets, saying that there would be dancing in the streets if the Tories got in. This is what Mrs T believes, but she wants the Callaghan argument to be used more often since it plays straight into her hands. What is Labour saying? she asks. Are they saying that after two years in office they have brought the country to a state of civil disorder? Furthermore, if Labour says that only they can deal with the unions, are they implying that the country has been turned into a one-party state?

As she discusses such matters, the reserved manner and the punctuation-mark smiles disappear. One sees a woman more passionately embroiled. Mrs T knows that her voice is against her; it is a shortcoming of which she is acutely aware. She knows too (from watching, amongst others, Michael Foot) that the worst thing to do is to read out a speech. Her best parliamentary effort this year, in her view, was her winding up of the economic debate in October, when she was not constrained by a text. Texts make her voice go dull, dead. But when she warms to a theme (perhaps it would be better to say cools to a theme) the problems of a cultivated voice disappear. Something hard and cold shines through the accents.

It is the Iron Lady of Russian demonology, the image she found at the beginning of the year, which has since done her nothing but good. The strong Tory line on defence is not a contingent aspect of the Thatcher ideology – it is fundamental. And Mrs T is an ideologist through and through. She welcomes Labour's pretensions to be the party uniquely able to govern since they confirm her ideological line. No doubt she perceives that the wind is in her favour – as Labour becomes less popular, its version of corporatism becomes less popular too. When the whole strategy fails, as she expects it shortly will, there will be no call for a Tory replacement of the social contract: those who vote for the Tories will be voting against the contract itself. They will be voting, precisely, for her brand of right-wingery.

The picture then that we gather from the past year is one of growing confidence in her own judgment. A long time ago Mrs T was observed eating up Lord Boyle for breakfast. Lunch was a fricassee of Edward Heath, with Lords Barber and Carr as side dishes. Reginald Maudling was her tea-time snack, picked off the plate and gobbled down before you could say Knife. Who's for dinner then? Has she not had enough of her own kind? Is not the Government hanging in the window, like New York dressed turkeys, waiting for the first customer? As Mrs Thatcher takes her own turkey out of the oven, this column wishes her a merry Christmas. We hope that the bird is good, that the trimmings are up to scratch, and that her ambitions will be thwarted in the end.

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Paul Johnson

Christmas Day in the Bunker

No doubt Marx had Labour governments in mind when he said that history repeated itself, first as tragedy then as farce. For the failure of the Wilson government of 1964-70 was, indeed, a tragedy for the British people. By contrast, the Callaghan experience, while gruesome, painful, grotesque, at times even horrific, is devoid of redeeming pathos, and bounded only by the conventions of low comedy. We laugh at the inmates of the cabinet room; we are not moved by their absurd predicament.

The last act has now begun. Ministers are moving into the terminal, or bunker phase, which overtakes any irredeemable regime or government in its death agonies. Of course going down into the bunker has its compensations; it is an anaesthetic against the real world. In 1600 the economist Gonzales de Cellorigo, deploring the catastrophic decline of Spain, wrote that the authorities were so oblivious of economic realities that they lived 'outside the natural order'. When the bunker beckons, the natural order is left gratefully behind. To cross the portals of Number 10 today, to penetrate 'the Downing Street dimension', is to enter Looking-Glass World, the Land of Cockayne. Reading Trevor-Roper's riveting account, *The Last Days of Hitler*, one is struck by the extraordinary optimism which radiated from the Berlin bunker and its lunatic inmates, so that sane, well-informed men who passed through its bulkhead were so mesmerised by the ravings within that they returned to the world proclaiming the war was about to be won. One general, Koller, noted: 'I often ask myself whether I am really too stupid to follow the spiritual soarings of these people and to recognise their way of salvation. Perhaps they have a sixth sense and can see things to which we ordinary mortals are blind. One begins to doubt one's own sanity.'

One does indeed. Certainly, in the harsh light of the real world, the men in the cabinet bunker do not inspire confidence. There they are, 'hunkering down', to use Ehrlichman's expression in similar circumstances, preparing to 'tough it out'. Would that we still had a Crossman to record their *obiter dicta* and cavortings! Tony Crosland, the slippered pantaloon – not at his best on his hunkers, I fear; bleary old Peart, stumbling over his ermine; the druidical Elwyn Jones, conjuring spirits out of the vasty deep; Eric Varley, the boneless wonder – remember his 'resignation' over Chrysler?; Prentice the Albatross, the unlucky Finn on a superstitious ship; various undistinguishable Freds and Stans. They say that Fred Mulley ought to resign over the cuts. How naïve can they get? Fred's staying. Then there is Michael Foot, back from licking Mrs Gandhi's jackboots, and searching industriously for more principles to 'nationalise'; Merlyn Rees, scourge of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (or whatever they're called); poor old Shirley, trudging along gamely, the cabinet's Mother Courage; Albert Booth, who might be described (to quote Bismarck on Napoleon III) as 'a sphinx without a riddle'; and so on. As I say, there they are, clinging together in the dismal unity of the condemned, intoning their lugubrious shanty, *Till the Oil Comes In* (or is it *Waiting for God-oil*?).

Or, consider the case of Mr Denis Healey. He is a true bunker-man, harbouring invincible optimism behind a rhinocerine carapace, off which any criticism bounces merrily. In less than three years he has had ten budgets, mini-budgets or 'packages',

Pantomime Shows for All the Family

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each based on faulty arithmetic and schizophrenic economics, oscillating wildly between appeasing the TUC and satisfying the IMF, each in turn inexorably falsified by experience. The late Aneurin Bevan had a low opinion of Labour Chancellors, but even he did not envisage the horror of a desiccated miscalculating machine. 'The Chancellor is genuinely baffled by the latest trade figures,' says a newspaper. But when is he not baffled by events which everyone outside the bunker not only expects but foresees as absolutely inevitable? And I like that 'genuinely' – Healey's bafflement must be the only genuine thing about him. For there is a darker side to this genial bully, a point made by Dickens in *David Copperfield*:

> 'Traddles,' said I, 'Mr Micawber don't mean any harm, poor fellow; but if I were you, I wouldn't lend him anything.'
>
> 'My dear Copperfield,' returned Traddles smiling, 'I haven't got anything to lend.'
>
> 'You have got a name, you know,' I said.

That is it: we British have nothing to lend, but we lent Mr Healey our name and he has paraded it before the world as a byword for shameless scrounging and improvident impudence. Nor is he finished yet. His decision to sell off the nation's BP shares suggests that he has now decided to adopt the financial 'system' followed so ambitiously by Sir Hugh Fraser of Harrods, and it could be that he will have some interesting new items for auction by the time he introduces his eleventh budget – round about the end of January on current reckoning. D. H. Lawrence once described Balzac as 'a gigantic dwarf', and I must admit that there is something monumental about Healey even in his awfulness; he is wrong, but he is wrong on a scale and with a consistency which raises him almost to the level of a work of art, the King Kong of finance.

Public Humiliation

You cannot say that Prime Minister Callaghan is an artistic object. But he, too, has the bunker spirit. There he sits at the map-table, Generalissimo Jim, moving phantom armies of sterling, 'nipping' deficits with ghostly pincer-movements, and wiping out a speculative thrust with an invisible export. Of course of real power he has none, any more than Nixon had in his last days. Wedged between indignant trades union bosses on the one hand, and suspicious bankers on the other, Jim's activities are exclusively verbal. He will do such things, as yet he knows not, as 'twill be the terror of the Movement. It says a lot for Jim's authority that, even in the minor and wretched affair of 'Andy' Bevan, he was unable to get his way, being first obliged to write a craven letter getting a postponement of the decision, then being publicly humiliated by the body which, according to the constitution, is the watchdog of party policy. How low can a Labour Prime Minister sink? Why, lower, actually – for Callaghan, having understandably sneered in the Commons at a Labour party political broadcast, written at the level of the fourth form in a punk rock comprehensive, was then obliged to issue a grovelling apology, verbally and in writing, to two backbench nonenities. It's tough at the top, isn't it Jim? Of course he has his occasional victories. He positively and successfully refused to see the Archbishop of Canterbury. That took real guts. Who did His Grace think he was, asking for an interview with a busy Prime Minister – Kevin Cadge of the National Union of Parasites? Jim's rudeness to an elderly clergyman should go a long way to show the world that, while a Labour government may have its problems, it intends to stand no nonsense about spiritual values. Or cultural values, for that matter. It is a source of some satisfaction to Jim and his parliamentary managers that the authors' lending-right Bill was talked out – after Michael Foot had made the enormous and unprecedented gesture of issuing a two-line whip! Writers come just below Archbishops of Canterbury in Jim's practical scale of values. How dare they try to clutter up the parliamentary time-table? Don't they realise that begging is the prerogative of the big battalions?

Business as Usual

No doubt Jim misses Wilson's presence in the bunker. But aromatic phrases from the glamorous Wilson years still linger in the air. Jim is not going to 'stand idly by' while the Trots steal the party he loves. He intends to 'stand up and be counted' against 'this tightly-knit group of politically motivated men'. Well, sometime. Perhaps he will scorch them with 'the white heat of the new technology'. Anyway, inflation will come down 'in weeks, not months', once North Sea Oil 'begins to bite'. Meanwhile, Jim is busy after his fashion. Messages go off to the outside world. Quangoes are distributed. Life peerages are conferred. One little item of bunker activity caught my eye: the leader of the taxman's trade union, who in this year's Finance Act triumphantly secured for his members immensely enlarged powers of search and entry, has been appointed Chairman of the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights. It may be Christmas, but in the bunker it's business as usual. Office still has its delights, however meretricious. Aneurin Bevan wrote: 'The purpose of getting power is to be able to give it away.' With respect, that is not a sentiment Mr Callaghan can quite bring himself to share. Indeed, at the moment his chief anxiety is whether he can beat Sir Alec Home as the shortest-lived prime minister since the war. After all, the worrying fact that Sir Walter Mitty, KG, made way for him so graciously was an indication that, in one little man's opinion at least, the game must be almost up for Labour. To paraphrase Shelley, 'If Wilson goes, can Jim be far behind?' I have yet to hear that Callaghan has begun addressing the portraits of Sir Robert Walpole, William Pitt and other predecessors who adorn the walls of Number 10, but if, like Nixon, he invites his Foreign Secretary to kneel down with him in prayer, I fear he may be treated to a riposte which would make even the Sex Pistols blench.

As for the rest of the bunker crew, what brains and ideas they once possessed have been stupefied by failure, self-deception and infectious chicanery. Of course, when it comes to straightforward, practical prestidigitation, they are simply not in the Nixon league. Petty fiddlers and pair-breakers, incompetent fixers, peddlars of half-truths and terminological inexactitudes, the present cabinet would be incapable of organising a 'caper' even on the level of ineptitude demonstrated by the Watergate Gang. Compared with Nixon, an operator on the grand scale, they remind me of that splendid image of Yeats, in which he describes 'the eunuchs of Hell' enviously watching the great Don Juan as he rides triumphantly into Hades, and 'staring upon his sinewy thighs'. No sinewy thighs in this government, you bet!

All the same, it is true to say that virtually the only consideration which ministers now entertain, in tackling any issue is the party interest – indeed, the question of sheer survival. The bunker atmosphere may induce hallucinations but it does not stop members of the Government endlessly counting votes, real or imaginary, actual and potential. The unwillingness to sack a single central or local government bureaucrat, or anyone, if possible, on the state payroll, is prompted not only by fear of the union bosses but equally by the belief, widely shared among ministers, that such employees are, or at any rate should be, grateful Labour voters. The old Wilsonian concept of 'the payroll vote', once confined to the House of Commons, has now been expanded into 'the national dimension'.

False Affections

Again, it is the desperate desire to hold seats and cities in next year's local elections which has dictated the party-political distribution of the Rate Support Grant. And of course what lies behind the Devolution Bill, a gallimaufry of absurdities and contradictions which makes Peter Walker's disastrous local government 'reform' seem, by comparison, a masterpiece of inspired administration, is not a regard for the national interest, still less any concern for ordinary Scots or Welsh people, but the overwhelming anxiety to hang on to once-safe Labour seats. The clue lies just as much in Wales as in Scotland – which is, I suspect, the chief and perhaps the only reason why the two are lumped incongruously together. For Labour took an appalling hammering in South Wales at the last local elections. It is a significant fact that the two most powerful men in the cabinet, and the two who have determined the main lines on which the Bill should be drawn up (even if they have not exactly read all of it), both have Welsh seats; equally important, neither is a Welshman, or inspires much affection down there. Callaghan was born in Portsmouth, and calculated he was well dug in at Cardiff – until those local election results. Foot is a carpet-bagger from Cornwall, who was thrown out of his seat in his own part of the world, and was extremely fortunate to be 'fitted in' at Nye Bevan's old constituency; but that, too, could be vulnerable unless the Government can exorcise those wild Welsh spirits.

So there we are, in this grim Christmas of 1976. It was almost exactly a year ago that the Government first took the wrong

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course, over the notorious Chrysler rescue-operation, and entered their period of real trouble. I wrote in the NS at the time (26 December 1975): 'Now, in the wake of the Chrysler affair, the whole political situation is transformed. Suddenly the Government has a ragged and demoralised look about it.' The events of 1976 have followed inexorably; the point of no return has been passed; and I cannot see them spending another Christmas in office. Nevertheless, though honour is gone, the urge to cling on remains. Deep down in the bunker, the cabinet are determined, as Lloyd George said of the Balfour mob in 1905, 'to die with their drawn salaries in their hands'.

Frank Field

Poor Them

1976 has been a boom year for poverty. Unemployment is at a record post-war level of around 1.4 million, and probably underestimates by about 500,000 the numbers wishing to work. Recent information released by the Government shows an increase of 30 per cent in the numbers of poor persons within one year and a 43-per-cent increase in the numbers of persons who live on incomes below the state's poverty line. Here are the twin issues on which the Labour movement could build a new mass offensive against Treasury orthodoxy – or so one would have thought. Instead, radical energies are spent largely on protesting against the deportation of an ex-member of the CIA or letting forth much sound and fury about reforming the House of Lords (much of the wind coming from those who wrecked the last serious proposal for reform a few years ago). Why is it that Labour is largely ignoring the poverty and unemployment issues?

First, what are the facts? Each year Parliament approves new supplementary benefit scale rates which are now generally regarded as the official poverty line. We have heard a great deal over the past weeks of feather-bedding the unemployed and of social security recipients picking up benefit increases well above those allowed to most of us under the current phase of incomes policy. But a careful look at the scale rates shows a different picture. For example, a mother with a child under five is given a daily allowance of 51p to cover all the needs of her child, barring its share of the rent. The poverty line income for a single person living alone is £1.80 a day and for a married couple £2.90 a day, although in each case there is an addition towards the rent.

Using these figures, the Government publishes annual returns on the numbers of people living with incomes at or below this level. Because claimants can be drawing supplementary benefit while at the same time having a little money in the post office, or keeping a few pounds from part-time earnings, it has become customary to look also at the numbers with incomes up to 40 per cent above the minimum scale rates.

At the end of 1974 the Government estimated that 10 million people were living with incomes below this cut-off point. Twelve months later the numbers had risen to 13.1 million. But even more alarming has been the growth in the numbers of persons living on incomes which are actually below the minimum supplementary benefit rates. These include families where the breadwinner is in full-time work as well as those who are sick or unemployed. By the end of 1975, the army of the very poorest had reached and topped the 2 million mark, a growth of over 600,000 within a 12-month period. The year 1975 saw the biggest increase in the numbers of poor since the 1930s.

'I see little hope for us unless I can get a job. Life on social security is just an existence, but one keeps going. We live from day to day and dread the winter,' is how one unemployed family described life at the bottom. While the Government has taken little action to counter the growing severity of the slump, has it fulfilled its commitment to protect the living standard of those already in poverty?

A careful look at the way the present Labour Administration has reviewed benefits shows that some of the very first cuts in public expenditure were aimed at the poorest. These cuts were brought about in two ways. In the middle of last month all social security benefits, except family allowances and the family income supplement, were increased. The Government claimed that they had kept their election promise to maintain the value of long-term benefits (as retirement, invalidity and widows' pensions are officially called) in line with earnings or prices – whichever is more favourable to claimants – and the short-term benefits (which are the allowances paid to the sick and the unemployed) in line with prices.

Until the last review the Government calculated increases in earnings or prices by making a retrospective calculation. They based the calculation on the rise in earnings and prices that had occurred since the previous calculation. However, in the most recent review the Government decided to take the period from November 1975 (the month in which the last review of benefits came into effect) and to estimate the likely rise in prices and earnings by the following November. By adopting this change the peak months of inflation during 1975 were omitted from the calculations. This saved the Exchequer £500m., but only by transferring this sum from the pockets and purses of the poor.

The Government can claim that it has maintained the real value of benefits compared with when they first increased them in July 1974, but only just. For example, the single pension was then increased to £10 and that for a married couple to £16. If we take the new level of benefits which came into force last month and revalue them at 1974 prices we find that the single pensioner has had a real increase of 20p during this period, a married couple a similar increase of 31p a week. The real value of benefit paid to the unemployed and sick has increased by 1p during this period, while those on the ordinary supplementary benefit scale rate have seen real increases of less than 10p.

But what this argument ignores is that by lengthening the period between reviews the Government has made a second big cut in public expenditure at the expense of the poor. For example, the value of benefit paid to a family with four children dependent on the ordinary supplementary benefit scale rate in the week before the November increase was down in real terms compared to July 1974. Single pensioners' benefits had been cut by over a pound and the married couples' rate had fallen in real terms by £1.70. By lengthening the period between reviews from seven months, which is the time-scale achieved by Barbara Castle, to the present one year, the Government made public expenditure savings of £530m. at the expense of the poor. The rather lame excuse given at the time for lengthening the review period was that inflation was being brought under control. Since then three other changes in government policy have similarly affected the living standards of the poorest. We now know that the Government was originally thinking of allocating £200m. additional resources to smooth the introduction of the new child benefit scheme which takes effect in April next year. This total was subsequently cut by £105m. Similarly, families have yet to gain a single penny for another clear commitment – that child benefit would be increased to protect families as food subsidies are withdrawn. Savings have also been made at the expense of disabled housewives, by postponing the introduction of the non-contributory invalidity benefit.

Why is it that with a record increase in the numbers of poor, partly caused by a record post-war level of unemployment, together with measures which have reduced the poor's standard of living, there has been so little mass opposition from the Labour movement? Part of the answer is that inflation disguises what is happening to real living standards. Whereas even the thickest member of the 1931 MacDonald Administration realised that the government intended to cut the level of unemployment pay, governments today bring about much larger real cuts by not reviewing benefits adequately to compensate for price increases, or by lengthening the period between reviews. Increases in the level of money benefits can disguise major cuts in their real value.

Another contributing factor must be that Labour representatives in Parliament and the unions have long ago become victims of their own propaganda. The movement claims the credit for introducing the modern welfare state which, it was widely believed, abolished poverty. With the welfare state established there was little personal capital to be gained by Labour representatives

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specialising in this area. It is therefore difficult to reconcile the fact of the increasing numbers of poor with long-established beliefs about the welfare state. With a few honourable exceptions Labour's spokesmen have shown their almost complete ignorance of what really happens at grass-roots' level.

The trade unions have also played a key role in stifling the debate on poverty and unemployment. Their stance is very different now from when they effectively ranted and raved at the Heath government. The lack of a clear trade union campaign arguing that unemployment stems not from personal failure but from the way we run our economy has led to a faceless discussion about unemployment. The unemployed have hidden themselves well out of sight, fearing – as some of them have explained – to walk down to the unemployment exchange in case their neighbours point to them as a 'scrounger'. Instead the unions have polarised the debate between one of supporting the Government, whatever it does, and what they regard as the worse alternative of a Thatcher Administration. The debate is narrowly kept to one of supporting 'the contract' at the expense of ignoring its 'social' side. Without the support of the larger unions the Labour movement has failed to get an effective campaign on a third possibility – one which supports the Government while at the same time attempting to change its economic and social policy. It could, and should, be the make or break issue for Labour in 1977.

Bruce Page

Press Prospects for 1977

In most of Fleet Street's embattled executive suites, the end-of-year mood is one of a kind of battered optimism. We see no reason, men say, for thinking that next year will be any worse than the one we've just been through. It's a bit like talking to soldiers who find that, to their surprise, they are still alive after a bombardment of appalling ferocity. Peering out through the smoke, they see the enemy gunners loading up for another barrage. But their own capacity for being appalled at the sight has deserted them.

Newsprint is the immediate problem, of course. The management strategy – if you can call it that – of the national press evolved in times when newsprint was a rather cheap commodity. In December 1972 it was £85 per tonne. As of New Year's Day 1977 it will be £265, with another increase expected in mid-summer. Of course, newsprint prices are going up all over the world. But for American and Canadian newspapers, able to buy with a fairly healthy currency, the problem scarcely resembles that faced by people who have to buy with sterling.

There is therefore much talk along Fleet Street of sterling having 'bottomed out'. Equally, there is much hopeful talk about a decline in the currencies of the Scandinavian newsprint-producers. (Of course, it's particularly poignant for newspaper managements that a principal influence on sterling is the way their own newspapers write about it: Malcolm Crawford of the *Sunday Times* still believes stoutly in his autumn tale about the IMF's decision to bring sterling down still further before giving assistance. True or not, he might buy himself a bullet-proof waistcoat before writing anything else along these lines.)

Who, then, will make a profit in the coming year? In terms of real money, made from the newspaper itself, on a scale sufficient to support development as well as pay the trading bills, the *Financial Times* and the *Sunday Express* look like the only certainties. (The Murdoch papers will probably do reasonably well if the *Sun* can rid itself of its industrial problems.)

The *Sunday Express* is a remarkable money-maker, but to speak of 'development' in that particular context seems mildly absurd. Journalistically, at least, the only thing to do is to leave it strictly alone, just as primitive tribes feel it wise to leave a particular fertile ju-ju untouched. And in the Beaverbrook group as a whole, the only possible role for the *Sunday Express* is to support the ailments of the *Daily Express* and the *Evening Standard* – ailments that are unlikely to be cured by the former going tabloid on 24 January.

No spectacle in the coming year will be more imposing than that of the Rothermere and Beaverbrook groups challenging each other to see who can afford to lose most money on a London evening paper. In absolute terms, there can be little doubt that the Rothermere side will win, for the *Evening News* may lose £6-7m. next year. However, in comparative terms, things are not so clear-cut. The Rothermere outfit, after all, is backed up by interests in North Sea oil, restaurants, taxi-cabs, provincial newspapers and commercial radio. The Beaverbrook group doesn't have much except the *Sunday Express*, a little oil, and a lot of bank loans for new printing equipment.

What, then, of the 'quality' field? Its financial situation is even worse in accounting terms. In 1973, the most wonderful year in the recent financial history of newspapers (Barber's spree), the quality press as a whole made a profit of £2.9m. (which is miserable). As the Interim Report of the Royal Commission on the Press sadly recorded earlier this year, that miserable profit had become by 1974 an aggregate loss of £2.8m., increasing to £6.8m. in 1975. When the figures are in for the year just past, they are not likely to be vastly better: nor will next year bring much more cheerful news.

The Times, for instance, will lose something of the order of £1m. The *Sunday Times* will make something, though probably not much (and the once-magic *Times Educational Supplement*, is like the education budget off which it feeds, subject to decline). The *Guardian*, as usual, will lose about a third of what *The Times* loses. The *Daily Telegraph* will return profits of a sort, but it has to support the *Sunday Telegraph*. The *Observer* will lose the best part of £1m., and ought to lose more if it is ever going to make a serious effort to recover its place in the market (which means putting on pages regardless of advertising support).

Yet none of these newspapers is likely to disappear – even though this pattern has been established for some years. The *Observer*'s rescue by Atlantic Richfield shows the reason: so long as social and political prestige attaches to long, thoughtfully-composed articles taking a modest (but always 'responsible') attitude to the problems of the day, so long will there be large and wealthy concerns prepared to support the enterprise. It's fair to say that the *Observer* has only done 'in reverse', as it were, what Times Newspapers or the Rothermeres have done in different order. It would be difficult for the Thomson family interests to continue subsidising *The Times* were it not for the fact that they have struck it about as rich as anyone in the North Sea.

To journalists who have been increasingly, and justifiably, worried about whether the mortgage repayments will be available next year, it's easy to think that this kind of thing represents a solution. Indeed, it's thought by some to be a recognition that 'serious' journalism must have a value above profit.

In a sense, of course, that's true. But in practical terms, what's happening is that British journalists are accepting, de facto, that serious journalism cannot be based on a financial transaction with its readers, but always requires subsidy from a third party. The 'quality' press as a whole (much more than the pops) badly needs an agreement to introduce new technology. It isn't a panacea, but it could – with good management – make an important difference. Last week, the so-called 'Programme for Action' agreed between the Fleet Street managements and five union secretaries was received with much hostility by representatives of the rank-and-file: it would, in the view of NGA members, cause 'too much redundancy'. Yet, remarkably enough, 'Programme for Action' doesn't actually call for any particular number of redundancies. It merely sets out some not ungenerous terms on which people can ask for redundancy if they want it. To the management side who have toiled and calculated hard, this looks like coarse, short-sighted ingratitude. But is it? Most print workers – either because they have high skills, or very easy jobs – enjoy their work. They want to keep on doing it. When one's talking about giving up a lifetime career, a sum of £10-15,000 is a help, though not exactly a temptation. But anyway, if someone else is so keen to own the paper that he doesn't even mind losing money on it – and if he has enormous sums of money anyway – why, particularly, should you sacrifice yourself? As Keynes pointed out long ago, union rank-and-file attitudes are usually much more rational (if not always more noble) than they look.

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Murray Sayle

Exit a Thoughtful Dragon

Japanese are going to remember 1976. Japan Inc. still has the most potent power-to-weight ratio of any of the world's major industrial economies, and still runs at close to full capacity, but there have been some ominous clanks in the machinery. In February this year, Lockheed burst; in December, the Liberal Democratic Party lost its overall electoral majority, for the first time in 21 years. In between, humiliating defeat in a Pacific version of Cod War with the US and the Soviet Union, the rumblings of an oncoming trade clash with Western Europe, and the first, still faint possibility of what economic Japan fears most: a world-wide gang-up against her exports.

Prime Minister Takeo Miki approached the 5 December elections with an economic picture at home which anywhere in Europe, even in West Germany, would have been the answer to a politician's prayer. Unemployment is just nudging 2 per cent of the labour force, which still means a million people out of work in a country with primitive social security. Real growth in the GNP for the year should be better than 5 per cent (but it was running at 13 per cent at the beginning of the year, just before Lockheed).

And year-end bonuses, which were being negotiated just about election time, average £650 each, paid in a lump sum in cash to just about every employed person in Japan. Taking the place of consumer credit, these bonuses in normal times give the worker his chance to buy expensive durables like a car, a colour telly, an air-conditioner. It is the year-end bonus that enables even the small-salary man's wife to own a £500 kimono. Policemen get a bonus, and so do hospital nurses, judges and even politicians. Miki himself collected a bonus of £7,743 for his year's work, calculated on some arcane scale of a Prime Minister's productivity (the Chief Justice got the same).

And worth every yen of it, Miki told the electors, campaigning along the lines of 'all things being considered, Japan has it pretty good'. Miki is very conscious of Japan's image in the outside world, and for the first time he took both Japanese and foreign correspondents campaigning with him, skipping up and down the aisle of his plane on the way back from Osaka to Tokyo, shaking our hands, posing for home-town photos, and asking disarming questions like: 'How did you like my speech? Anything you couldn't understand?'

Miki's standard speech was, indeed, fairly easy to understand. The Miki Government, he said, had got the economy moving despite the world economic turn-down. As soon as it was re-elected, he intended to get more public works going, and stimulate consumer demand. He did not, of course, tell Japanese voters that Japan has weathered the crisis so far by throttling imports and exporting just about everything that isn't bolted down, in what amounts to something like economic war against the industrial world – of Japan's output of 7.8 million motor cars and trucks this year, more than half will be exported. At election time, politicians understandably worry first about their own.

Lockheed? No problem, Miki told many questioners on this explosive point. He had managed to clear up one side of the scandal and take appropriate steps (a reference to his predecessor, Kakuei Tanaka, who campaigned while out on bail and is due in court on 28 January to start his trial on charges of taking a £1m. bribe). Other 'grey officials' had, unfortunately, escaped prosecution because Japan's three-year Statute of Limitations had run out. And, Miki added, he had no doubt that as soon as Osano-San and Kodama-San were well enough to help the investigators, the other, so-called 'Komdama route' for Lockheed bribe money would be cleared up, too. (This pair, Tanaka's multi-millionaire backer Osano and the sinister right-wing gang boss and former war criminal 'suspect' Kodama have been bed-ridden at home and, according to themselves, hovering just on the wrong side of being physically able to answer police questions for the past six months.)

Party disunity? All cleared up now, Miki told the voters, and actually managed to get his arch-rival Takeo Fukuda on the platform with him (once) for a stagey 'reconciliation' which would, in a Japanese Nô drama, have had both players tucking daggers up the sleeves of their kimonos.

Miki fought bravely and, within the limits of political practicality, he undoubtedly did his best to clean up at least some of the more outrageous corruption within his party. Some of his schemes even had a kind of hard Oriental sense to them – such as enlarging the number of people who select the party president from the elected members to 2,000 regional delegates, or even 20,000, so that there will be too many to bribe in bulk.

But the limits to Miki's reform plan, as things now work in Japan, were demonstrated by the campaign run by Kakuei Tanaka himself in his rural constituency around Niigata on the other, really backward side of Japan. There was, I thought, even something touching about Tanaka's way with the voters. He campaigned in his usual wooden clogs and expensive business suit, holding an umbrella over his head to keep off the drifting snow, while his audiences of gnarled farmers in rice-straw raincoats straight out of a Hiroshige print drank in his every word. His refrain was always the same: the new roads he would build, the subsidies that were coming for the textile mills, the new schools for their children.

'What about Lockheed?' an interjector yelled. 'How dare you mention Lockheed when I am outlining my plans for this district!' Tanaka shouted back. 'If you are interested in that, read the newspapers. It's all there.' Asked why he was appearing on behalf of a man out on bail for bribery, the Mayor of Niigata replied, in a line straight out of a Japanese gangster film: 'The boss was in a jam. I couldn't rat.'

The result was predictable. Tanaka topped the poll in Niigata, only a few points down from the days when he was Prime Minister and the boy wonder of the economic miracle. Of the ten named 'grey and black officials', including three who have actually been charged, only one failed to be re-elected, and he didn't stand. Now, led by Tanaka himself, they claim that they have been 'acquitted by the people'.

In a sense, Tanaka and his shifty band of 'grey officials' might be said to be among the winners of the Japanese general election. But the real winner of the election was, as it happens, my local member of the Japanese Parliament, representing a district centreing on Aikawa-Cho, a dairy-farming and timber-getting village in the mountains outside Tokyo. Yohei Kono, at 39, is a baby by the standards of Japanese politics, but he is personable and comes from a powerful (and very right-wing) Japanese political family. His father, Ichiro Kono, ran a wealthy faction of the Liberal Democrats for years, and his uncle is in the Upper House.

Last July, when Lockheed was filling the Japanese papers every day, young Kono unexpectedly led four other Liberal Democrats out of the party to form a tiny splinter group he called the New Liberal Club. I went to one of the meetings in the village called by his supporters at that time, at which Kono spoke to explain his move. No straw raincoats for these wealthy farmers: they sat in straight rows in the village hall, muscular necks wrapped in unaccustomed neckties, and it was hard to find parking space outside.

Why have I left the Liberal Democratic Party, which has brought Japan so much prosperity? Kono asked his audience. There was a curious murmur. The trouble with the Liberal Democrats is not Lockheed, he said: scandals come and go, and after all, the US has survived its *uotageto* (Watergate). But every year for the past 20 years, the Liberal Democratic Party has lost 1 per cent of the popular vote. If this goes on, said Kono, socialists and communists will take over Japan. What this country needs is *two* Conservative parties, 'as they have in the United States', competing for office, offering alternative policies, keeping each other honest and providing openings for young men of talent (no one asked him to suggest a name).

Well, said Kono, the New Liberal Club is the other Conservative Party. In a small Japanese village hall, this young man's challenge to the omnipotent Japanese Establishment seemed, at best, a harmless piece of *hubris*. But as the election approached and the Liberal Democrats' squabbles became more and more public, Kono did, indeed, get together a small party: somewhere he found enough money to run 25 candidates, the minimum which qualifies a Japanese political party for free poster printing and niggardly free TV time. Of this group of

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25, 17 were elected, and every one of the five members from the Kanagawa Province around Yokohama is now a New Liberal Club member.

Predictably, they are now being flooded with money, and Kono plans to put forward a candidate in every Japanese electorate in the Upper House election next June. The money seems to be coming from the relatively new, consumer-oriented businesses: Honda Motor, Suntory Whiskey, Pioneer and National Panasonic electronics have been mentioned. Kono himself has already been proposed by his still small group for Prime Minister.

He has, it is clear, struck a rich vein of right-wing discontent. What kind? His three promises give a clue, and so do very obvious social changes in my village in the past year. Three new supermarkets, spacious, heavily stocked, ultra-modern, have opened where little old ladies in dowdy kimonos until recently were the only retail outlets for fruit, fish, ironmongery and the rest. Suddenly we have four brand new garages in one small village, the Shell one being the sort of thing you find on the M1, if you can afford to.

Who needs an income tax cut most? The big businesses of Japan want more public works, big engineering schemes with real kick-back potential. Small businesses desperately need more consumer demand. Who is worried about getting his son into Japan's grotesquely overcrowded universities, which are still the only way to an executive job? The small-salary man who cannot afford the £5,000 bribe which is the going rate for entry to, for instance, minor medical colleges.

Who needs help to small businesses? The companies employing ten or 20 people, who have nothing for export; the rapidly disappearing skilled craftsmen, who make straw mats and sliding paper screens by ancient and unmechanisable methods; above all the small shopkeepers who make up as many as one family in seven in many small towns and villages. These people are unlikely to vote Left as long as the Emperor is on his throne, but they know, also, that they can never afford to buy political favours from Tokyo – especially now that Lockheed has disclosed how expensive Japanese politicians have become.

Japan will not find it easy, economically or politically, to trim sails to the prevailing bleak winds. The enormous over-capacity in steel and shipbuilding, for instance, was financed, like all Japanese industry, on borrowed money, averaging 85 per cent throughout the economy and often going to 95 per cent or higher in the fast-growing lines like electronics. Business bankruptcies are now running at 1,500 a month in the small business sector, the highest ever. Next year, some big crashes look inevitable, with a sharp increase in the present, but still just about manageable unemployment rate.

It has been a sudden surge of discontent on the *Right* that has brought the political management of Japan Inc. to the edge of disaster. The warning is clear enough, but the Liberal Democrats are still split between would-be reformers and those who intend to fight reform to the last, if only to stay out of jail themselves. When Japanese capitalism was in deep trouble the last time, in the 1930s, the country went Right and not Left, and finally to war for an answer. Young Kono has nothing like that in his own record, but there are plenty of rightists and ultra-rightists in Japan who have. As 1976, the year of the dragon, turns into 1977, the year of the snake (years are supposed to partake of the character of the beasts which symbolise them) there is quite a lot out here to think about.

Tokyo

Ian Mikardo

The Gap in the Fence

The most moving moment in the long history of men at war was that Christmas morning 60 years ago when some Tommies of the British Expeditionary Force and some soldiers of the Kaiser's army climbed warily over the parapets of their Flanders trenches and walked towards each other across the shell-pocked frozen mud of no-man's-land to swap Christmas greetings and cigarettes and a moment of goodwill to all men.

Did they but know it, those soldiers, British and German, were doing two things. They were defying for a few minutes the forces which prevented them from practising the normal decencies of their everyday life, and they were rebelling for a few minutes against their common enemy, the high-ups who had shanghaied each of them from his home and his life and given him unfamiliar clothes, an unfamiliar and unpleasant job, and unfamiliar and repulsive tools to do it with. That drawing together of the men in khaki and the men in field grey was not, as some thought, a Christmas miracle: it was a natural, spontaneous demonstration of the truth that man is not by nature a hater.

It was that same declaration of faith that, a few months ago, opened a gap in the border fence between Israel and Lebanon. Now there are three, evenly spaced along the frontier: at Khanlita, where the coast road runs from Haifa and Acre to Tyre and Beirut; at Dovev, in the central section beyond the north-ward slopes of Mount Hermon; and at Metulla, up in the far north-east, within gunshot range of Syria.

Dovev is a *moshav*, an agricultural settlement, much the same as any of a hundred other *moshavim* except for the tight-guarded barbed metal fence which is there to keep out Palestinian raiders. From its northern edge to the border is little more than an Olympic javelin-throw. In normal times its people till their fields in the archetypal Israeli posture of one hand on the tractor's steering-wheel and the other on a rifle. But today the Fatah have been pushed out of the southern strip of Lebanon which was Fatahland, and they have left behind them some thousands of Lebanese Christian villagers who are cut off from the hinterlands and hence from water and medical supplies and jobs and markets for their produce. So the villagers reached out to the south, across their border with Israel, for their daily needs.

The gap in the fence isn't much to look at. On the Lebanon side a notice: 'Beware of Mines.' And then the two army huts end to end, one the clinic and the other the waiting-room. In the clinic two doctors, one a Lebanese civilian and the other an Israel army reservist, and two nurses, again one of each. They work side by side, with no overt consciousness of difference. They do a long stint, from 8 a.m. till 3 p.m., and they treat between 100 and 150 patients a day, mostly children. Nearly all are treated on the spot, but a few are sent off for in-patient treatment at the hospital at Safed. It's like our NHS at its best.

The Lebanese doctor is an elegant, bearded young man whose French is accented more as if he were from Paris than Beirut. He works with a dedicated concentration, and is clearly happy in his job – and doubtless with the pay he gets from the Israel Government. Both doctors told me that at first the patients who came over were timid and suspicious, but now they're cheerful and trustful. Again it's the factor, as it was in Flanders, of opponents recognising a common enemy – in this case the Palestinian commandos who threaten Lebanese and Israeli villagers alike.

Most of the patients come from two large villages a few kilometres away, but some come from much further afield. They arrive in cars or taxis, often whole families together. Outside, in the sun tempered by the breeze that blows across the Galilee hills, there is a little queue of Lebanese having their papers and their luggage checked before going into Israel. But the most important thing that goes through the gap in the fence is the water-pipe laid from Dovev. At the Lebanon end of it stand two-tractor-hauled battered tankers being filled. Some of the water has made a pool, and a goatherd has brought a couple of hundred black-and-white goats to its edge.

On the Israeli side of the fence the first thing you see – and it looks so incongruous in the middle of that arid stony no-man's-land – is a post office. The first thing the Lebanese do when they come through is to write to their relatives from whom they've been cut off for many months. Some of the letters go to family and friends in Israel and on the West Bank. Many of the Lebanese who come through the fence go straight to family reunions. Others come to work. The men work mostly in agriculture, and the women in the knitting-mill and other light industries in the new town of Kiryat Shmona, once the scene of a particularly vile Palestinian atrocity. They do their shopping at the Co-op, and change the rest of their money into Lebanese dinars. So do the tobacco-growers, who bring their Latakia-type crop to sell in Israel.

A tiny candle in a dark world, but who knows how much light it could shine?

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"A journalist shall rectify promptly any harmful inaccuracies, ensure that correction and apologies receive due prominence, and afford the right of reply to people criticised..."

National Union of Journalists
Code of Professional Conduct

THE OBSERVER

AND PRISON CONDITIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

On August 1st 1976, The Observer published an article by a 35-year old Briton, Brian Price, who had escaped from a South African prison while serving a sentence for dealing in drugs.

The article was, in The Observer's own words, "based on conversations with Mr. Brian Price." It portrayed South African prison life as systematically barbaric and sadistic, dwelling with particular gruesomeness on execution methods. Many of the alleged facts were admittedly third hand reports.

The article was syndicated world-wide, and Mr. Price was given further coverage on BBC TV and Thames TV.

The South African Government regards Mr. Price's story as wholly inaccurate and sensationalist and denies the allegations entirely. This was made clear to The Observer.

The examining Magistrate, Mr. Allan King, who was involved in Mr. Price's case on more than one occasion wrote to The Observer in an attempt to set the record straight and to protest over inaccuracies and distortions.

The Observer declined publication.

On September 2nd 1976 the South African Embassy invited The Observer to nominate a mutually acceptable legal expert to visit South Africa with complete freedom to investigate the alleged facts in Mr. Price's story.

The Observer accepted the offer, but nominated a QC who, although eminent, was not acceptable to the South African Government.

In the spirit of the agreement to find a mutually acceptable and independent legal expert to investigate prison conditions in South Africa, the Embassy then proposed three equally distinguished British QC's.

The Observer's response to this offer was to publish an editorial on November 21st under the title "South Africa's Evasions."

This editorial concluded: "The South Africans' subtle evasions have now persuaded us that they must have something very serious to hide."

Three days after this editorial, the Director of Information at the South African Embassy wrote to The Observer repeating its offer, and said:–

> "I can think of nothing more blunt and to the point than a specific invitation to a legal expert to conduct a free and open enquiry into the Price allegations which your newspaper deemed fit to publish.
> Your leader of November 21st, 1976 as well as the letter which you addressed to me on November 19th, 1976, are in fact sophistic evasions. The central issue remains that we find a person who is mutually acceptable to enquire into the Price allegations."

Two questions

* **Is the South African Government's offer of an independent enquiry consistent with a country which has been castigated as guilty of "subtle evasions"?**
* **Has The Observer in this affair followed either the spirit or the letter of the extract from the National Union of Journalists' Code of Professional Conduct?**

DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION
SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY, LONDON

This advertisement is appearing in newspapers which published the allegations in several countries.

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J. J. Fookes

Pit Writer

As a boy from London, my mother used to fetch me and my sister to County Durham each summer holidays. One of my first memories is of seeing a figure come into the scullery next to the kitchen where my mother and grandmother were talking. The back of a slightly ragged jacket and calf-length trousers were all I remember as he bent to put down something under the scullery sink. There was a smell of what I now know was carbide from his acetylene lamp as curiosity made me walk towards him. Suddenly he swung round and shouted, 'Hello there me bonny lad!' All I saw were the whites of his eyes rolling in a blackened face and a red mouth and tongue as he laughed. I stood in terrified incomprehension. Then a voice came from behind: 'That's your granda. He's a miner.' A pair of dirty hands came out for me. 'Does thou want to be a miner when thou grows up?' he asked. With a wail I ran behind my mother. 'No I don't want to be a miner. He's all dirty Mum!'

The war came, Dad fell ill with tuberculosis and we went North on what seemed like a permanent holiday. There was an exciting mystery about London in winter for a boy, playing under street lamps, looking at tall buildings, going into tobacconists asking for 'wild Woodbines' and telling the shopkeepers to 'tame them', listening to a barrel organ, and buying hot chestnuts and eating them in a gang-den in the wall of a back street mews. But in Birtley in the summer there were open fields and hills outside the town where you could run wild and scent the grass, and if you wanted to, lie in it and listen to the wind sighing over a landscape where there wasn't a house to be seen for miles.

The funny thing was because I came from the South and always arrived each year in a suit and tie, wore shoes instead of boots, couldn't get used at first to running about without any shoes at all, as my cousins did in the summer, and on top of all that speaking differently from them, they used to think I was posh. I had to fight three instead of one on my first day at the Birtley school. In 'dickers' – games of dare – I had to jump from greater heights to escape the tag. When they got their revenge – the ones who thought I was posh – they couldn't believe it. They thought I was better educated and more intelligent than they were. In fact I had less education and have never thought myself of more than average intelligence. In common with a lot of other London kids I doubt if I had more than three months' schooling due to a wartime evacuation from 1939 until the time we left London in 1941. When I sat down to the 11-plus arithmetic exam in the Birtley school I didn't even know what decimals were, let alone being able to work them out.

I failed the 11-plus exam and went on to elementary school. There I found out about this 'class' thing where the boot was on the other foot. I've seen it from both sides of the fence since. But it seems to me that the middle class have always been the worst offenders as far as class prejudice goes. Certainly it was true in the case of a particular teacher at this school. At least once a week he would give a recital of the things he disliked about miners. Birtley was then a mining town. Most of the menfolk either were, or had been, miners. So to miners' sons and daughters this paragon of virtue and social grace used to go on about their fathers and brothers habits of 'wearing coloured neckerchiefs'. Of 'sitting on what they call their hunkers and spitting at street corners'. And – his favourite one this – 'frequenting their gin palaces'. No doubt he had a motive for his desire to instil contempt in us for our own flesh and blood. It was probably his notion of a way to 'rescue' us from a working-class mentality. But, funnily enough, it had the opposite effect and it was the first time I remember sympathising with the miners and thinking that if the teacher was an example of the middle-class ideal we had to follow, I didn't want to be like him. Otherwise I had the usual fantasies about wanting to be middle class in a system which bred in us the idea that it was inferior to be working class. I used to fill exercise book after exercise book with the adventures of an imaginary gentleman type and his son who used to chase smugglers and crooks who had working-class ways of expressing themselves varying from 'Put yer 'ands up!' to 'Yus guvnor' – when they were caught.

None too soon, I began to read Hemingway, and I think it was in his *Advice to Young Authors* that he suggested the way for a youngster to learn to write was 'to find out how ordinary people lived' and that becoming a journalist could be a means towards it. Leaving school I applied for a job as an office boy on a local newspaper as a first step but I was turned down because of the elementary school tag. It was a blow then but, looking back on it, it was no great loss. My experience of life as a result has been first-hand which it would not have been as a journalist.

My parents had fixed up a job for me in a factory – and I had agreed to take it if I didn't get the office job. I had told my father earlier that I wanted to be a writer. He was the decentest man I've ever known but he looked distinctly embarrassed by what he thought was a kind of pretentiousness in me. 'Working class don't become writers,' he protested gently. 'You want to get yourself a good trade like everybody else and you won't go wrong. Security, that's what you want.'

At that age I wanted 'security' like I wanted a hole in the head. I wanted excitement, adventure, an opportunity to explore. Like teenagers in every generation, life became a search for identity. But you can't know what you want until you have tried a few things. I realised, however, it was sensible, though dull-sounding, advice and I went as an apprentice motor mechanic.

It was three years before I got the flash of intuition which gave me a sense of purpose again after the disillusionment of being turned down for journalism. It was 1947 and the newly nationalised coal industry began to run a recruiting campaign. I saw a poster. It said something like: 'Be a miner. A job with a touch of adventure.' Well the ad. men had got that right anyway. But something else clicked. Hemingway's words came back to me – 'find out how ordinary people live'. Well, apprentice motor mechanics are ordinary people. But I was hung up on the fact that the job wasn't what I had chosen. Being forced into it by circumstances had been a denial of my right to choose. I therefore set out along the lonely road to Harraton Colliery, which I was told needed labour, to sign on as a trainee miner.

I count myself lucky that at what proved to be the beginning of the rise of the working class 30 years ago I chose to learn what it was like to be a miner. I learned how to work in darkness with only a flickering oil lamp to light the way. How to keep my back bent for hours on end and run as a coal putter in a seam four foot high. That roof was a tyrannical master and flayed the skin off your back if you forgot about it. How to drive the poor little pit ponies and be as easy on them as you could; how to push, lift and manoeuvre 40 coal tubs a day through a labyrinth of rising and dipping galleries to the coal-face and back again without getting crippled or killed – as more than a few were. Finally how to become the titan who nobody could afford to let down, the coal filler. Cramped and scalded in sweat you had to learn to work relentlessly, pitying neither yourself nor anybody else.

It was to be the beginning of 15 years and more of what seemed like at times horrifying confusion, but what I now know was the condition that was necessary to produce a better novel than I would have done without it. Despite my luck in the first few years at Harraton Colliery I did get injured badly enough to make me leave. Like many other miners who get hurt I drifted for a while into other jobs while the injury healed.

The second time I went down the pit was in a colliery in Warwickshire. The atmosphere in the Midlands was different from that in Durham and alien to the kind of values the Durham miners had shown me. Nevertheless in spite of the money madness in the Midlands the novel continued to grow as a concept, and I wrote a few short stories which showed progress in content and technique. They were still set in the idiom of the Durham mining community that I had learnt to know at Harraton. A threat of closure came to the Warwickshire pit and I took a job at a neighbouring colliery. This proved to be in the next county, in North Yorkshire where I got a job as an ironstone miner. Then came redundancy and six months on the dole when I decided to make the first attempt at writing my novel. I failed miserably. The

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characters, except one, were not developed strongly enough and I had no idea of what direction the narrative was to take. Yet I was certain I could write and that the idea was sound. I turned to Karl Miller who was then literary editor of the NEW STATESMAN, and said that the 12 chapters I had shown him 'had the makings of a successful novel'. He advised me to be more 'brutal', meaning, I suppose, more direct in my application to it. It was my first taste of failure at something I really wanted to do.

Then came abject confusion for seven years. I wanted to get back to the pit in Durham to find out the things about people I had missed the first time, and only realised when I tried to write about them. But the Durham collieries were being closed down too and the coalfield did not need labour. Exiled from the source of the novel I took any job I could get – ICI chemical worker, miner on the new tunnel under the Tyne, steelworker. As a steelworker for the last five years of the seven, I was on a shift system which rotated round the clock and the week, resulting in shifts at all hours and weekends too, with one-and-a-half days off during the week. Keeping a writing routine became impossible. I had to wait for what would have been minor disasters for anyone else, like the occasion when I broke my right arm and wrote a 60,000-word novel based on the experience at the Tyne Tunnel with my left. This was a breakthrough of a kind because it proved to me that I could complete a novel when the inspiration was fresh. But it did not satisfy me. I knew the idea about the Durham mining community was the major theme as far as I was concerned, and that I had to get back to it somehow.

I applied to the then North East Arts Association for a grant to give me the time I needed to get back to the Durham coalfield and write the novel. Then began a gamut of overwrought pleading on my part – when I look at the letters now I realise how desperate I must have been – and refusals, rejections and part acceptances, readers' reports on the tunnel novel saying that my 'prose was unexciting', and that I showed 'an honest if dull competence'. To cap it all, there was even a complaint about lobbying on behalf of one candidate. What kind of lobbying? By whom? For whom? No one will ever know. I'd had more than a bellyful of that by the time it had finished with a final refusal.

Eventually I wrote to the NCB asking if I could return to a colliery in County Durham as a miner for two years and be given facilities to interview management. A manager had come into the novel at the end of the first volume and I'd found out I didn't know enough about him or his sort. But mainly I wanted to discover how the pits and the miners had changed.

I hadn't been back at the pit long and just getting myself hardened off again, when one of my new marrows asked me in confidential tones: 'Is that right what they're saying that thou's a middle-class professional man what's come to work with the miners to write a book about them?'

That was where I came in, as they used to say at the pictures. I began to think that Dad had been right. Working class never do become writers.

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Profile: Rod Stewart

This Old Heart of His

There have been few singers of popular music in the past 20 years as versatile as Rod Stewart. Whether as the balladeer of 'Sailing', the storyteller of 'Killing of Georgie' or as the rock'n'roller, Stewart has used a natural ability to move his listeners. He handles the slender and the serious with the same panache. On one side of a record he can play the aggressive degenerate – on the other, the naïve romantic. The immediacy of these songs' settings and the emotionalism of his voice have won him a rare combination of popular and critical acclaim. By simultaneously topping the American and British single and album charts in 1971 he achieved a success of which not even the Beatles can boast. In concert he bounces, struts and poses at the edge of the stage with a charismatic arrogance. A football lopes its way from the wings into the spotlight, Stewart chests it onto his thigh and punts it into the audience. His head characteristically tilted back and the microphone-stand gripped at an angle, robed in anything from a leopard-skin suit to silk pyjamas topped by a swirling St Laurent scarf, 'Romeo Rod' enjoys his audience and is at home.

But not everything is so innocent. A huge publicity machine has grown up around Stewart, manufacturing and adjusting the image so necessary in the selling of music in a competitive industry. In the past ten years manager Billy Gaff and his publicist, ex-gossip columnist Tony Toon, have fed packaged gossip to the popular press with a remorseless efficiency. Fleet Street, searching for young readers, laps it up; but it has alienated another audience. In the music press he has been labelled as the Judas of Rock. 'It's Britt that has changed him' is a familiar cry – a reference to his voluptuous but neurotic companion Britt Ekland. Someone peculiarly British (working class, patriotic, an admirer of the Queen) appeared lost to the glamour of the tax havens and the New Hollywood. He had displayed insensitivity by publicly announcing his departure from his band, the Faces, before telling them personally and by leaving Britain last year, he had deserted the fans who had made him a star, not to mention Her Majesty's Inspectors of Taxes. Now the rise of the 'blank generation' has made Stewart at 32 look sedate and contrived.

His parents and his four brothers and sisters were born in Scotland, but the family came to their sweetshop in Archway Road, North London during the Depression. Here Stewart grew up, the youngest by ten years, and, by his own admission, a spoilt child. He attended the local secondary modern where he was captain of football and cricket, and his parents divided over whether his future lay in football or music. At his father's bidding he stuck out a couple of months as a 16-year-old apprentice with Brentford Football Club until the glamour of cleaning the first team's football boots wore off. Neither did a week as a gravedigger or a spell in the family sign-painting business satisfy him. Though he had never played in any school band, he began to find solace in a mixture of folk, trad jazz and eventually rhythm-and-blues clubs and also on his busking trips to Europe where he was impressed by the fashion sense of Italian and Spanish youth. The Spaniards, however, did not return the compliment and threw him out for vagrancy.

It was in this period that he got his reputation for being a 'folkie at heart' which is still reflected in his choice of album material. He first made the front page of the *Daily Mirror* when he was among 20 beatniks hosepiped off a houseboat. The politics that normally accompanied such a life style passed him by. For example it was not a close reading of the texts of Bertrand Russell that took him and his guitar on a number of Aldermaston marches. He went because it was fashionable. He also lost his virginity there. (In three different interviews, he has claimed to have lost it in three different places.) 'You'd never own up at the time you were just going along for a giggle . . . there used to be terrible orgies there.' He dropped his allegiance to CND when it became too fashionable.

He played in his first band, Joddy Powell and the Dimensions, when he was still living at home. They played at rugby club dances and small clubs. He was allowed to play harmonica on two numbers for which he dressed immaculately even though he was unpaid. Early in 1964, soon after being thrown out for being too pushy he was returning from Eel Pie Island, when his voice, well oiled by liquor, was heard by an acquaintance Long John Baldry. By the time their train reached London, Stewart had landed himself a £35-a-week job with Baldry's Hoochie Coochie Men. His idiosyncratic clothes, long hair and stage manner

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soon won him a reputation around London. Billed as the Mod's Delight, he was in fact a lot more foppish than even the mods. He was taken for a homosexual, when in fact his appetite for women was at its height. He seemed totally unimpressed by his first big break as a solo recording artist. His first recording session was booked for 10 September 1964 at 11.00 a.m. Producer, technicians, session musicians and managers all arrived punctually but by noon there was no sign of Stewart. When they rang his parents' sweetshop they found Stewart upstairs in bed having completely forgotten; he baulked at the suggestion of jumping into a taxi, because of the cost, and finally arrived an hour later admitting that he had not bothered to learn any of the planned songs for which the musical arrangements had been prepared. He thought the numbers too commercial. He told them he would like to record a track from Sonny Boy Williamson; if someone could lend him £2 – he had seen the album in a shop window – he could go out and buy it. The record was made, and was not a hit.

Over the next two years his interest moved from slow blues and R & B to Tamla. He also moved through two other bands, Steam Packet and Shotgun Express; both were remembered for Stewart's clothes and his affectation of a black singer's voice. The image was not then a calculated camouflage for any insubstantiality in his music; indeed, in his next bands Jeff Beck and the Faces he worked with some of Britain's most accomplished musicians, but he himself has always shunned the responsibility of leading a group and for a while used to tear down posters that promoted the group as 'Rod Stewart and the Faces'. Inevitably his position as singer, his charm and his humour put the spotlight on him. The audiences, filled with the devotion of a football crowd, could sing along with every word of his songs. They felt that Rod was both one of them and what they aspired to be in their dealings with girls, footballs and authority. The innocence of that relationship has only been soured when the longstanding contradictions between his songs and his life became too large to ignore. The themes to *Z Cars* and *Match of the Day* can still be heard before his concerts but the pose has changed. 'Britt says I've got to look moody.'

Much of the anger and frustration among his fans arises from a confusion not only over how much of his previous image remains in the latest model, but also how real that image is anyway. In a world where the fans want heroes and villains, they do not know any longer how to classify him. For all the working class booziness, he has a petit-bourgeois upbringing. Like most mods his rebellion consisted of a revolt into style – and the appropriation of respectable consumer items like scooters, smart clothes and amphetamines. He has never really questioned the nature of the society he rebelled against; rather he always wanted to succeed in it: 'The working class have always been their own worst enemies.' At a time when he was singing 'Only a Hobo' or 'I'll never own a private jet, on the Stock Exchange I'm no threat', he owned a £300,000 house in Windsor (formerly the home of Lord Bethell, Lord in Waiting to the Queen), two Lamborghinis and a Mercedes.

The contradictions start to pile up. He worships Scotland and its football and will literally fly thousands of miles to see them play, or pay huge sums to have videos sent over of their big games. Yet he was born in Highgate and his 1965 EMI profile lists his main dislike as Scotland. In the Sixties he repeatedly turned down offers because they were not 'musically valid' and yet now the music has become obscured by a top-heavy management. He has been quoted in *Oz* making Powellite remarks but his strongest musical influence has always been black singers such as Sam Cooke. A born mannerist forever posing in front of the camera, audience or the mirror, he is as impressed by style and presentation as the acutal substance of what is being presented.

By his own admission Stewart has no pretensions to being an intellectual even of the calibre of Townsend. He failed his 11-plus with ease. Like Dylan, he lies in interviews to stifle the boredom of repetition and becomes either disingenuous or evasive with personal questions. Melvyn Bragg's interrogation was so unrevealing that it had to be scratched from Mark Kidel's recent BBC TV documentary. Unlike many rock stars who become disoriented by their success, he evidently does not make a habit of organised self-analysis. 'There are times when I get terribly depressed. What about I don't know and when I saw a programme on telly the other day which said that depression is a form of mental illness I got terribly worried.' Unlike many musicians, he is rarely given to introspection about the isolation of stardom or its moral complexities. Indeed he has always revelled in fame. 'I like to live glamorously, unlike a lot of people in Hollywood who go out to snack bars in jeans.'

A combination of the mothering Britt and an elaborate management structure deals with his every need and acts as a cushion from reality. The irony is that he left the Faces last year to assert his independence and because he was 'sure for the first time in his life of exactly what he wanted to do'. But if anything his control has weakened. Genuinely stung and bewildered by the recent criticism, he seems to regret the image of glamour and champagne with which he launched his solo career on the other side of the Atlantic. The insignia of his present tour of Britain is a fist punching its way through a boater. For a talented and frivolous man, frustrated by his own narcissistic obsession with image, it is not an inappropriate symbol.

Jeremy Bentham

Permission to Prosecute

Mr Enoch Powell made a speech last October to the Surrey branch of the Monday Club containing the offensive phrase 'alien wedge' in relation to immigrants. Many thought a prosecution under section 6 of the Race Relations Act 1965 was well-merited. 'Deploring' Mr Powell's words, the Attorney-General nevertheless refused to give his consent to a prosecution. The lay observer may be excused for asking what on earth it has to do with the Attorney-General. If Mr Powell had assaulted an immigrant in the street then either the police or the victim himself could simply have started criminal proceedings without the by-your-leave of anyone, least of all Her Majesty's chief law officer.

The explanation is slightly surprising, given the stress laid in our political culture upon the legalistic distinction between good clean law and bad dirty politics. Parliament has decreed that certain offences having a sensitive flavour should only be prosecuted if the Attorney-General first grants his fiat. The Race Relations Act apart, this requirement applies to the Public Order Act 1936, the Official Secrets Acts and sundry statutes to do with corrupting officers of public bodies and with publishing seditious libels. In some cases with a less political flavour, either the Attorney or the Director of Public Prosecutions (whose office is under the superintendence of the Attorney-General) may be required to, and do, give consent. And the DPP alone is called upon to sanction proceedings in a wide variety of matters, under 50 or so separate statutes, particularly where there is a risk of abusive or vexatious proceedings, such as the offence of wasting police time.

The Attorney-General dwells in a grotesque constitutional limbo. He is head of the Bar and principal law officer of the Crown, advising the Government (of which he is a member, and he is also, invariably in modern times, an MP) on legal matters, and representing it in important civil and criminal proceedings to which it is a party. In cases where his sanction is needed to prosecute he is supposed to exercise an independent judgment in the public interest, though as Mr Silkin himself pointed out when seeking an injunction against the Crossman *Diaries*: 'In all the independent actions of the Attorney-General it is not to be thought that he need necessarily shut his eyes and ears to all matters that affect the decision that he has to take. If he wants to consult [his ministerial colleagues] . . . of course he can; but in the end it is his independent decision and responsibility.'

There's the rub. The Attorney-General is supposed to look after the public interest; yet, in precisely the kinds of area where he is given this responsibility to sanction prosecutions, the public interest is ensnared in governmental, or even partisan, interests. Can the Attorney-General ever view with detachment a prosecution under the Official Secrets Acts which might reflect on a colleague in political office? Can Mr Silkin be expected to take a really detached view of the doings of an abrasive contemporary parliamentarian like Mr Powell?

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London Diary

☐ What wishes for the New Year? I have one merely to prevent further boredom. I hope that when the next financial crisis blows up it will be dealt with effectively and I don't mind how – siege economy, deflation, at any rate something. I suppose this is too much to expect. I wonder – do ministers really believe that last week's measures were anything more than a non-event? The boasted cuts do not effect the money being spent now; they merely reduce the imaginary sums that the Government dreams of spending in the future. No minister has to walk to his office; no high civil servant has to renounce his index-linked pension. Perhaps Denis Healey thinks increased spending is the way out. Certainly that has been the result. The false alarm of an increase in VAT sent everyone to the shops buying TV sets and washing machines. Similarly the delayed increase in liquor taxation – a delay I think without a precedent – was a signal for everyone to buy. When I went for a single bottle of sherry the man next to me was spending £2,000 on whisky. Our austerity Christmas has seen the greatest spending spree of all time. During the war the Swiss put chocolate on ration whenever they had a surplus and it disappeared within a few days. But the Swiss had a real surplus to get rid of. Have we? It is all very strange.

☐ Oil is another topic that puzzles me. When oil prices first went lurching up there was great talk of economy. Many people drove more slowly for a few weeks and loyally turned off unnecessary lights. Now we shrug our shoulders and drive on regardless. We have got into a tangle over the oil question. As individual consumers we should all like cheap petrol. But as a nation heavily invested in North Sea oil we should surely want oil to be dear. If we had any sense we should be looking for alternative sources of energy and by that I do not mean nuclear power with all its catastrophic consequences. The source is there waiting to be used. It costs nothing and will go on for ever. If scientists applied themselves to the problem of harnessing the power of the winds with half the enthusiasm they have shown over their nuclear researches we should have unlimited energy at our disposal within a few years.

☐ Ian Trethowan has just been appointed Director-General of the BBC with as much solemnity as though he were the Archbishop of Canterbury. No doubt he is a more important figure than any Archbishop so I suppose that is right. We hear again of the splendid new programmes we shall soon be provided with. The promises are unlikely to be fulfilled. Is better television desirable in any case? We spend vast sums on the BBC and run up a deficit in our balance of payments by buying Japanese television sets. I recognise the usefulness of motor cars, much as I deplore them. But television is pure luxury. The only argument I ever heard in its favour is that married men, being glued to their television sets, beat their wives less than they did. As I am not a middle-aged wife the argument does not impress me. Radio has some social function if only in providing news bulletins. Television has none. Surely an enlightened Director-General should be putting out worse programmes and fewer of them. It is nonsense to say that the BBC has to compete with ITV. Concerns compete only when they are selling similar goods. The BBC is not selling anything. It has a guaranteed income from the licence fees and would be just as well off if it had no viewers at all. There is an admirable objective for the new Director-General to pursue.

☐ I paid a nostalgic visit to Oxford the other day and found life in Magdalen College as agreeable as ever despite the fact that the Great Tower is crumbling away. I also learnt to my delight that the problem of women has again raised its head. Not the general problem of women which we all have, but that of admitting women to what were until now colleges reserved for men. At Cambridge there has been a helter-skelter towards what is called co-residence. Soon only Magdalene and perhaps Peterhouse will hold out. But at Cambridge the colleges decided the matter for themselves. At Oxford the university has stood in the way and now withholds its consent to any further advance. The reason for this is extraordinary. With co-residence women would get a share of the larger endowments men's colleges possess. There would be more scholarships for women and more fellowships. Yet the main opposition comes from the women's colleges. Not for them the wiser course taken at Cambridge by Girton which has itself gone mixed and is overwhelmed by applications from men. During the American Civil War apologists for the South claimed that the slaves liked slavery but I have not heard that they ever found a slave to say so on the public platform. The academic women of Oxford defend their own slavery. The ban imposed by the university is, I think, contrary to the Sex Discrimination Act and also of course an infringement of the autonomy of colleges. I look forward to an early defeat of the obscurantists male and female.

☐ Despite the fashionable talk about sex equality there is, I think, a widespread reluctance among women to accept equality of opportunity. They still think that men are superior and deserve the best jobs. This may make sense if a woman simply wants a bread ticket for life by getting married. It applies perhaps with heavy manual work though women do most of this in Russia. It does not apply at all in the intellectual world. In my experience women are cleverer than men as well as being more industrious. The only clever man who frightened me was the philosopher John Austin, and even philosophers were frightened of him. I number at least three intellectual women among my friends who have frightened me for years. One is a literary scholar; one is an historian; one is a writer. I am devoted to all three of them; I enjoy their company. But I have to sharpen my wits before we meet and I come home exhausted. One of the troubles is that when men drink they become clumsier mentally. Women become quicker. The strain is almost unbearable. Ranging more widely, Jane Austen was the cleverest novelist ever known. George Eliot was also pretty clever, though hers was not the sort of cleverness I like. Women novelists are all so clever nowadays that I find them too difficult to read. I can understand men being suspicious of sex equality and most of them are unless they are high-principled like me. But women have no cause to fear it. Their only danger is that of winning too often.

☐ After our miraculous summer I cannot be melancholy about the year that is ending. But having less to do nowadays my thoughts often turn to the past. Who would I recall from the dead if I had the power? Pre-eminently three, all men I am sorry to say: Gerald Berners, Max Beaverbrook, Michael Karolyi. Lord Berners had a title that went back to the Middle Ages. Lord Beaverbrook's was a more recent creation. Michael was a Count whose ancestor won the title by saving the Habsburg Monarchy in the early 19th century and he himself forfeited by destroying it in the 20th. Their titles were irrelevant. What the three had in common was an enormous sense of fun. Gerald was the greatest prankster of his age and wrote, among other books, the best account of Oxford in wartime, *Far from the Madding War*. Max also loved pranks even when he was involved in apparently serious affairs. Michael derived amusement even from his own setbacks which were many. He died in exile but has now, I am glad to say, received his memorial. A statue of him, suitably modest, stands outside the Parliament House in Budapest. My time with all three was one of continual laughter. Whenever I see something ridiculous in the newspapers, which is often, I want to share it with one of them.

☐ A final query before I run out of thoughts. All over the world men have created squares and piazzas so designed that the rainwater runs off the paving stones. Why is it often impossible to reach the concert halls on the South Bank dry-shod because of the pools, ankle deep, that accumulate whenever it rains?

A. J. P. Taylor

This England

Prizes: £1.50 book token for first entry, £1 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Last Saturday the *Daily Mail* revealed how Mr William Taylor, an unemployed man from Bradford, Yorkshire, was stranded in Dover after taking the wrong bus following a demonstration in London against public spending cuts. He went to the town's Social Security office and was given a travel warrant to Bradford – *Daily Mail* (Anita Finesilver)

☐ The estimate of the number of criminal families is based on a national projection of a figure quoted in a recent statement by Chief Superintendent Colin Hardman, of the South Tyneside police. He said: 'If we could pluck about 400 families out of South Tyneside and drop them into the sea we would have a pretty law-abiding area.' – *The Times* (P. Guthridge)

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Tom Baistow

No Jokes Like the Old Jokes

A funny thing happened to the English joke on its way here from the 18th century – it made the long journey intact, losing none of its Anglo-Saxon simplicity, unmodified by fashion, the Industrial Revolution or war, ready for use this Christmas in pantomime, the club circuit and what television warned us the other evening was going to be a 'cornucopia of fun'. Accent on the corn. As comedians say when a rival comes out with an even hoarier chestnut than usual: 'He must have got that one out of Joe Miller's joke-book.'

The joke here is that, unwittingly, they are very likely to be right. Joe Miller was a real person – he was born towards the end of the 17th century – and one of my treasures is his joke-book or, to give it its proper title, *Joe Miller's JESTS: or, the WITS vade-mecum. Being a Collection of the most Brilliant Jests; the Politest Repartees; the most Elegant BONS MOTS, and most pleasant short stories in the English Language*. In fact the side-splitting goodies inside were not assembled by Joe himself but collected, 'many of them transcribed from the Mouth of the Facetious Gentleman whose name they bear', by 'his lamentable Friend and former Companion, *Elijah Jenkins*, Esq.' and published in 1739 in Fleet Street (where else?) after Mr Miller had left his boozing cronies rolling in the aisles of the Fountain Tavern in the Strand for the last time.

Joe was clearly a fast man with the ladies as well as a quick man with the comeback, as jest No 57 shows (the lamentable Elijah obviously had a shrewd eye for a potential readership among professional humorists, for every one of the 247 jokes is numbered for easy reference):

> Poor Joe Miller happening one Day to be caught by some of his Friends in a familiar Posture with a Cook Wench, almost as ugly as Kate Cl——ve, was very much rallied by them for the Oddness of his Fancy. Why look ye, said he, Gentlemen, altho' I am not a very young Fellow, I have a good Constitution, and am not. I thank Heaven, reduced yet to *Beauty* or *Brandy* to whet my Appetite.

Once one gets used to the period circumlocution and the curious convention that coyly uses dashes to 'disguise' words like G-d, d-mn and H--se of L--ds while referring freely to pissing and farting, the jests quickly reveal themselves as old and tried friends as familiar as Bruce Forsyth, Morecambe and Wise, Les Dawson, Jimmy Tarbuck, Frankie Howerd *et al.* They are all there, the generic gags, from the pun to the sick joke. Puns easily outnumber the other types of humour catalogued, many of them direct from the lips of 'Daniel Purcel the famous Punster', who was noted for his quick-as-a-flash repartee, as in No 51:

> He was desired one Night in Company, by a Gentleman, to make a Pun *extempore*; upon what subject, said Daniel; the King, answered the other; the *King*, Sir, said he, is no *Subject*.

The pun plus sex was plainly as popular then as on, say, the Benny Hill show, although admittedly more sophisticated. Take No 3 for instance:

> Mr H---rr---n, one of the Commissioners of the Revenue in Ireland, being one Night in the Pit at the Play-House in Dublin, Monoca Gall, the Orange Girl, famous for her Wit and her Assurance, striding over his Back, he popp'd his Hands Under her Petticoats: Nay, Mr Commissioner, said she, you'll find no Goods there but what have been fairly entered.

For the simpler groundlings there was that perennial favourite No 85:

> A Country Farmer going cross his Grounds in the Dusk of the Evening, spy'd a young Fellow and a Lass, very busy near a five Bar Gate, in one of his Fields; and calling to them to know what they were about, said the young Man, no Harm, Farmer, we are only going to *Prop-a-Gate*.

The basic sex joke was also as great a favourite in the coffee houses then as it is in the Northern clubs today, and the original honeymoon story is there in all its suggestive simplicity (No 164):

> A young Lady who had been married but a short Time, seeing her Husband going to rise pretty early in the Morning, said, What, my Dear, are you getting up already? Pray lie a little longer and rest yourself. No, my Dear, reply'd the Husband, I'll get up and rest myself.

No 155 gives one an insight into how those honest Georgians enjoyed themselves when Soho was a good address and the blue film had not yet been invented:

> Some Gentlemen going into a noted Bawdy-House Tavern at Charing-Cross, found great Fault with the Wine, and sending for the Master of the House, told him it was sad Stuff, and very *weak*: It may be so, said he, for my Trade don't depend upon the Strength of my Wine but on that of my Tables and Chairs.

Now we know what Samuel Johnson meant when he said: 'Why, Sir, Fleet Street has a very animated appearance; but I think the full tide of human existence is at Charing-Cross.' Even then the El Vinos of the day required the ladies to sit down, it seems.

Ethnic 'characteristics' were standard laughter material then as now, although neither the Jew nor the black as yet had appeared on the joke scene. The Scot, of course, had been fair game since 1603 although he had not metamorphosed into the bawbee-pinching miser – he was still being portrayed as the untrustworthy, devious, parasitic Celt who had invaded London for the pickings in James the First's train. As No 150 puts it:

> A Scotsman was very angry with an English gentleman, who, he said, had abused him, and called him *false Scot*; Indeed, said the Englishman, I said no such Thing, but that you were a *true Scot*.

Taffy had not yet been dubbed a thief but was dismissed as a harmless peasant bombast, as in No 128:

> An Englishman and a Welchman disputing in whose Country was the best Living, said the Welchman, there is such noble Housekeeping in Wales that I have known a Dozen Cooks employ'd at one Wedding Dinner; Ay, answered the Englishman, that was because every Man *toasted his own Cheese*.

Already, however, the Irish joke as we know it and love it today was well established. Paddy, at all social levels, exhibits that alleged failure to grasp the fundamentals of cause and effect which this holiday season will win more laughs than even that one about the Pakistani who . . . Take No 160:

> A certain Lady of Quality sending her *Irish* Footman to fetch Home a Pair of new Stays, strictly charged him to take a Coach if it rained for fear of wetting them: But a great Shower of Rain falling, the Fellow returned with the Stays dripping wet, and being severely reprimanded for not doing as he was ordered, he said he had obey'd his Orders; how then, answered the Lady, could the Stays be wet, if you took them into the Coach with you? No, reply'd honest Teague, I knew my Place better. I did not go into the Coach, but rode *behind* as I always used to do.

The well-known Yorkshire traits too were already a subject for Southern mirth, as in No 156:

> A Gentleman coming into an Inn in Smithfield, and seeing the Hostler expert and tractable about the Horses, asked, how long had he lived there? And what Countryman he was? I'se Yerkshire, said the Fellow, and ha' lived 16 years here. I wonder, reply'd the Gentleman, that in so long a Time so clever a Fellow as you seem to have not come to be Master of the Inn yourself, Ay, said the Hostler, but Maister's Yerkshire too.

Real xenophobia began, of course, at Calais (No 95):

> A French Marquis being once at Dinner at Roger Williams's, the famous Punster and Publican, and boasting of the happy Genius of his Nation, in projecting all the fine Modes and Fashions, particularly the Ruffle, which he said was de fine Ornament to de Hand, and had been followed by all de oder Nations: Roger allowed what he said, but observ'd, at the same Time, that the English, according to Custom, had made a a great Improvement upon their Invention *by adding the Shirt to it*.

Already the English affection for the underdog was strongly developed, judging by the number of jests in which the downtrodden put one over the boss class. The best is No 189:

> A Countryman sowing his Ground, two smart Fellows riding that Way, call'd to him with an insolent air: Well, honest Fellow, says one of them, 'tis your Business to sow, but we reap the Fruits of your Labour: to which the plain Countryman reply'd, 'Tis very likely you may, truly, for I am sowing Hemp.

Political gags abound. For example, No 69:

> When Oliver first coined his Money, an old

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> Cavalier looking upon one of the new Pieces read the Inscriptions, on one Side was *God with us*, on the other, *The Commonwealth of England*; I see, said he, *God* and the *Commonwealth* are on *different* sides.

This sick joke, of very odd provenance, must have been going the rounds for some 200 years when Miller told it (No 21):

> Sir Thomas More for a long Time had only Daughters, his Wife earnestly praying that they might have a Boy, at last they had a Boy, who, when he came to Man's Estate, proved but simple; Thou prayedst so long for a Boy, said Sir Thomas to his Wife, that at last thou hast got one who will be a Boy as long as he lives.

Hardly a saintly remark, but Sir Thomas went on, via Tower Hill, to be canonised. Bad taste, it seems, has never been a bar to holiness.

Miller had plenty of timeless situation jokes for all occasions. I happened to spot this one, No 208, in a TV variety programme a couple of years ago:

> A Dog coming open-mouth'd at a Serjeant upon a March, he run the Spear of his Halbert into his Throat and killed him: The Owner coming out rav'd extreamly that his Dog was killed, and asked the Serjeant, why he could not as well have struck at him with the blunt End of his Halbert? So I would, says he, if he had run at me with his Tail.

The only difference in the TV version was that the offending weapon had become a garden fork wielded by a suburbanite's neighbour. This year's Christmas cornucopia, you may be sure, will be overflowing with the fruits of Miller's labours in the taverns of London. I move that Equity, in all fairness, should ensure that those long credit lists of script writers without whom no comic today seems able to tell a joke should include the name of Joe Miller.

C. H. Rolph

Commonsense and Cheerfulness

Some years ago the postman, an old friend, handed me a returned Christmas card and said I had fourpence to pay. The man I had intended it for had readdressed the envelope to me and written on the back: 'This is all a lot of bloody rot and I don't want nothing to do with it and you can keep it.' Remembering that the postman had not yet had his Christmas box, I rectified this and then told him that that was where the fourpence could come from. We went on to discuss the message on the envelope and he thought perhaps the best thing to do with something like that was to forget it. He proceeded, I believe, to forget it. But I couldn't do this because I knew the man to be in grave trouble, his Christmas message to me being among the minority that had been really thought out and carried some meaning. He has always maintained since that he's miserably ashamed of the episode, but I've often wondered how many people would, if they were really honest, write some such message on a proportion of their cards and whether, for that matter, there mightn't be a profitable line of business in cards conveying exasperated or insulting messages. 'I am a poor man,' said Mr Pooter, 'but I would gladly give ten shillings to find out who sent me the *insulting* Christmas card I received this morning.' But the idea seems never to have caught on.

'There are some people,' wrote Robert Lynd in this paper one Christmas, 'who want to throw their arms round you simply because it is Christmas. There are other people' (he went on, just as you might have expected of him) 'who want to strangle you for the same reason.' If I had to take up a position with one faction or the other, I should be ill at ease among the stranglers. I like Christmas, enjoying it always with a resolute minimum of inquiry, a quite deliberately uncritical conformity nourished by the knowledge that so many people with great big intellects (or so they seem to me) allow themselves to do the same; and to enjoy themselves no end.

Nor does it matter where they are. As the Christmas of 1968 approached, I was just leaving Australia after a stay of some months. It was far too hot for me everywhere, and I was walking, if any walking *had* to be done, in the shadows of tall buildings. Yet the shop windows were being decorated with cotton-wool snowstorms, frost-covered Christmas trees, and toy cottages with icicles hanging from their roofs. The nativity scenes of course showed Arabs and date-palms, and the baby in the manger was naked. In Sydney, beach picnics were all going to include roast turkey and pudding. I find now that to enjoy my own Christmas I need to get all that under control, relegating it to a series of tableaux visible only through little round windows in the mind. I always manage to do it.

But there is so much else that needs to be similarly straightened out. Take Mr Pickwick and that heart-warming Christmas Day at Dingley Dell of which we think so fondly after a couple of brandies. Do you remember that? Then you are mistaken. You merely think you do. On Christmas Day, after a ghastly breakfast at which two medical students talk about human dissection, the whole Pickwick party goes to church, comes home to a meal which is merely referred to as 'a substantial lunch', and then goes to see Mr Pickwick fall through the ice while skating. He is rescued, is shrouded in borrowed shawls, and ridiculously trots home to bed. Then Sam Weller takes him up a dinner which is not even described. *That's* the famous Christmas Day at Dingley Dell. All the fun and games have taken place on Christmas Eve, and even that was all mistletoe and kissing, the whole party going to bed at midnight. No Christmas tree, crackers, turkey, plum pudding, gifts or carols. And no cards.

A Christmas card, in my own childhood, was a rarity and an ostentation. Someone, it was explained, was showing off. The following year one or two more people showed off, the quality of life was beginning to heave and change, and there had begun the long march towards the receding peak, an illusory ascent necessitating that every man, both he who bought and he who sold, should get a rise every year. And yet the first Christmas card had been commissioned in 1843 by Sir Henry Cole, whose other contributions to the fabric of our lives included the founding of the Public Record Office, the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Albert Hall and the Royal College of Music. His card depicted a rustic-framed triptych, two sombre drawings of poverty flanking the highly coloured portrayal of a happy and prosperous family drinking port. It sold about 1,000 copies at a shilling a time; and no one today outside the trade in antiques would look at it twice. Cole had an interest in furthering the development of the postal system, but his Christmas card idea was slow to dislodge the established custom of making 'cut-outs' of the kind that people kept in scrap-books. Even in 1870, the year of Dickens's death, the Christmas card industry was stirring and the post office was stirring it. Did anyone then suppose that, whatever the postal charges, the Christmas cards dispatched from and to this country alone would one day run into thousands of millions?

The truly significant thing, whether or not one finds it surprising, is that the commercially produced Christmas card has never yet attempted to breach the walls of religion or secularly benign sentiment. Birthday and even New Year cards have long since lined up with the saucy greeting from the seaside. The gruesome, the macabre, and the sick are acceptable for every anniversary but the birth of Christ, and the Christmas message makes its greatest concession in admitting a few funny men like Heath Robinson and Thelwell; but they have to be truly funny. Will it last for ever? The Post Office couldn't stop the thing if it wanted to; and anyway its accountants long for Christmas as eagerly as children. 'We're sending no cards this year,' people tell each other, and some of them buy space in a newspaper to warn their friends what not to expect. The following year they are back on the old treadmill.

No doubt it may happen by the year 2000 or 3000 that on 25 December men will say to each other 'This used to be called Christmas: have another?'. But they will be vaguely celebrating *something*, just as they are now. Christmas took more than three centuries to get started, or anyway to be recognised by the Church of Rome as a Christian festival. If it now takes more than three centuries to lose (or freshly to disguise) its meaning, that seems as far ahead as anyone should dare to look. Gatecrashers who want to enjoy the Christmas they don't morally support can line up with that shrewd old ruffian Samuel Butler, who said: 'After all, what is the essence of Christianity? Surely commonsense and cheerfulness, with unflinching opposition to the charlatanisms of a man's own times.'

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Anne Bennett

As If He Was My Own

'If you could give her some support by ringing her up,' this medical social worker said. 'Okay,' I said feeling benevolent. 'What's her trouble?' They explained that she would neither go out nor answer the phone. Rosie then asked me to pin this memo up in front of me, 'I'd like to think that should I collapse on to the floor all eventualities are covered.'

The memo read:

TO ALL DIVISIONAL DIRECTORS
FROM DEPUTY DIRECTORS
PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING URGENT MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR A CLIENT IN THE COMMUNITY

1) Ring the client's GP informing him the client needs help and that this is an emergency. N.B. Do not be drawn into quasi-medical discussions on the degree of emergency.

2) If the GP or his substitute is unwilling to visit, inform the GP that you are required to report the difficulty.

3) Ring the administrator of the family practitioner committee who will advise on finding an alternative doctor.

4) If the administrator is not available or an alternative doctor cannot be found, ring the ambulance service.

5) If the ambulance service is unwilling to respond, ring the police.

6) Give a written report of the difficulty experienced in obtaining medical assistance in an emergency indicating to the Divisional Director at which point the procedure failed.

When we came back from lunch I was looking through some old files including that of David Hall. David did not choose his parents very well. His mother was only 15 and his father 18; on top of that they were brother and sister and she didn't like him anyway. The father vanished into limbo while his mother would have been prepared to love the baby except that, unfortunately for all concerned, David emerged not looking like children generally do. He had a mass of open sores later diagnosed as *epidermolysis bullosa*. The saying that only his mother could love him was not apt in this case. After making a brave stab at it, she confessed to feeling nothing at all for him and made a present of him to the social services department. We advertised for foster parents and finally chose an elderly vicar and his wife who, given today's selection procedures, would never get beyond the group encounter meeting.

I tend to be a bit anti-vicar and wife myself, but then I go and meet them and like them on sight. I met the Grants for the first time when they had looked after David for two years. Between them was David, who at five years old looked more like three, steroids having shortened his growth. He was wearing a suit specially made by Mrs Grant with the seams all folded so that did not rub against his skin. The little sailor hat with the upturned brim disguised the fact that his hair rubbed off at the crown, leaving him with a bald patch. What hair there was shone brown and silky; his eyes were the same. He evidently knew his manners, putting out his hand even though he kept his mittens on (he had no fingernails) and asking how I was despite having difficulty speaking (his throat was scarred with sores).

As time went by David grew an inch or two, the Grants grew old, conferences came and went and eventually it was felt that David should go somewhere where he would be more in the company of other children than he had been up until then. After many rejections, a school for the handicapped accepted him and off he went like a little boy to prep school. Mrs Grant and I travelled back without him. 'He'll be all right,' I suggested. Mrs Grant was doubtful. A number of well-meaning people wondered whether she was being possessive. After a month or so I went down to see him and sat at his table along with four other children. The quartet consisted of Billy with no legs, Jane who had a tiny little head and who looked after Ronnie whose limbs would not coordinate, and Anne whose head was three times bigger than anyone else's. She had to be strapped into her chair or the weight of her head would make her body slip down. 'We're all very sorry for David,' she said to me, 'because he has such a job to speak.' The motley little crew agreed, and outside the hospital I hated the normal children I saw running around.

Although the centre did all they could David did not prosper. In fact he declined, and eventually tests showed he was inwardly so scarred that a mild infection could kill him. Finally it was decided that 'his emotional well-being and happiness were of paramount importance and that therefore he should be returned to the care of his foster parents'. When he went back to the Grants they gave him a home tutor and read to him from the Brothers Grimm and A. A. Milne, and he had his collection of Dinky cars. It came to the Christmas of 1973. There were three of us in the office the day after that Boxing Day eating cold turkey and Christmas cake that someone had brought in. The phone rang for me and they told me that David had died on Christmas Day. I felt I should be crying but wasn't. There seems very little evidence to me that God gives much care for his little ones but in this case at least He had let David die before his foster parents. Be grateful for small mercies, I thought to myself.

All the progressive departments are highly praised now for their use of professional foster parents. 'A job like any other,' they say. 'We must pay them well, at least £30 a week.' I suppose that is where David would be sent now; after all he would have been a hard case to place. But let us recognise expediency when we see it . . . Don't call them 'foster parents'. It's not fair to the Grants.

HELP DISABLED PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR RIGHTS

— never more important than at a time of cuts in public spending.

The Disability Alliance (representing 45 organisations, including the Spastics Society, Age Concern, MIND and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf) announces a new rights handbook and pamphlets to put everyone in the picture about the practical needs and rights of disabled people.

We invite readers of the New Statesman to buy one or more of our publications. Please note the half-price offer for disabled people.

The price for each of the following publications is 50p (or 25p for a disabled person).

		Numbers required: Nondisabled	Disabled
	The Disability Rights Handbook for 1977 — A Guide to Income Benefits and Certain Aids and Services for Handicapped People.		
	Pamphlets		
No. 1	**Poverty and Disability:** The Case for a Comprehensive Income Scheme for All Disabled People.		
No. 2	**The Financial Needs of Disabled Children**—Jonathan Bradshaw.		
No. 3	**The Incomes of the Blind:** A Review of the Occupational and Financial Problems of Blind People of All Ages — Fred Reid.		
No. 4	**The Poor in Hospital:** A Study of the Incomes of People Living in Long-Stay Hospitals and Residential Homes — Ann Shearer.		
No. 5	**The Price of Deafness:** A Review of the Financial and Employment Problems of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing — Irene Loach, introduction by Jack Ashley.		

Bulk orders of 20 or more copies of each particular title can be obtained half price (and for organisations concerned with disabled people at half the special rate in this advertisement). This coupon must be sent with postal order or cheque (adding 10p for postage for an order for one copy of one publication and an additional 5p for **each** further item) to:

Publications, The Disability Alliance, 96 Portland Place, London W1.

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

There Go Your Pips

Long distance telephoning is nowadays a commonplace, everyday matter and about as exciting as cleaning your teeth. A brief glance at the code-book, a deft twiddling of the dial and there you are, jabbering away nineteen to the dozen to friends in Fiji. But in the pre-dialling days of local and central switchboards, manned mainly by female operators with diplomas in elocution, making a call was what the French so graphically term *toute une affaire* and at no time more so than at Christmas, when the elocutionists were run off their feet. Then the urge to speak to loved ones and relations (not always the same thing) became irresistible. Throughout Christmas week houses rang with shrieks of 'What's Aunt Honor's number?' and 'No answer! She's probably out at a mah-jong party.' Sometimes, particularly in Surrey, the telephone apparatus itself was concealed beneath the skirts of a dainty little telephone lady in a crinoline, a saucy idea which possibly brought a *frisson* to tired, male, stock-broking loins, but more often than not the instrument was on a bracket on a wall near the front door and from it jolly Uncle Bob in Darlington got his yearly call ('How's that old leg of yours?'). Game old grannies were carefully extracted from their fireside chairs and led out ('She's just coming . . .') into an icy hall to croak a greeting to the grandchildren ('Is that my sweet little Penelope?'). At three-minute intervals, a mechanical bleeping sound warned of the passing of time and of the expense. This useful reminder has now been silently removed by the Post Office.

Here at 'Myrtlebank' we make rather a thing of the festive season. The hedges contain holly trees and the holly trees contain berries, and sprigs and twigs find their way indoors and are propped on pictures and stuck into puddings. The motherly ewes in the orchard are bulging significantly and with luck there will be lambs frisking on Christmas Day. During the drought, our birds disappeared completely (just as well that this column wasn't a weekly ornithological article entitled 'Guests At My Tit Table') but now they are back again and I am treating them in the cold weather to liberal supplies of an all-purpose bird food called 'Swoop'. There is, of course, a robin. If I am late rising, this sagacious bird appears at my bedroom window looking reproachful and clearly saying 'Where on earth is our Swoop?'. Hard to credit, possibly, but there would be no point in reporting it if untrue. My Cousin Madge has a sweet tooth and so a cherrywood occasional stands ready, laden with soft centres, for her next visit. What we call 'chrysanths' are everywhere. Any moment now our social activities will be crowned by an invitation to hot punch and hostess dainties *chez* the Bultitudes. We are all set.

The most cheering local news concerns our highly agreeable and intelligent Rector, hard-working, underpaid, war-damaged and far from robust and awaiting an operation, who, after a number of troubled years, has happily married, for the second time. But alas, this silver lining has an episcopal cloud to go with it in the shape of Eric, our Bishop. His predecessor, the late Robert, our Bishop, author of *Christian Ethics*, was a somewhat austere figure who emanated from one of the dustier Oxford colleges (*'C'est magnifique mais ce n'est pas la gare'*) and once allowed himself to be coerced into blessing, in full canonicals, a new Exeter multi-chain-super-store, or whatever they are now called, where our Westward TV picked him up in the grocery section, calling down God's benison upon row after row of Heinz baked beans. I rather doubt whether Christianity figures very freely in the balance sheets of such emporia. It seems that austerity did not cease with the departure of Robert, our Bishop. Operating from plushy quarters in the Close, Eric, our Bishop, has been reported in the national press as expressing disapproval of our Rector's marital move. A Bishop is, like the rest of us, entitled to his views, strict ones apparently, and anyhow experience has long since forced one to abandon the naïve and probably rather childish expectation that professional Christians will be a bit kinder, more generous in spirit and less beastly than the rest of us. History's pages are full of fairly rum bishops, both arch and plain.

Some centuries ago there was a Bishop of Winchester who provided a useful facility in the M3 area (a chain of brothels, chock-a-block with virile visitors). Bishops, who have usually had, if nothing else, brains, have found little difficulty in squaring awkwardnesses with their consciences. One wonders what actually goes through their heads as, dressed up like Christmas trees, they intone 'Blessed are the meek'. It is a church niche that has always appealed to retired headmasters, wondering where next to make nuisances of themselves. The assumption of the dog-collar is followed by a token two years in a not too slummy parish, and then comes that unfailing promotion from the ranks into Glory. Rough luck on parish priests over whose heads these meteorites have shot and who have been at it, so to speak, all their working lives. How many clerics have modestly refused promotion to bishop status and thereby made sure of inheriting the kingdom of heaven? Precious few, I bet.

Invited recently to appear (a return visit, I boastfully announce) on Thames Television and have a half-hour chat with the clever and delightful Mavis Nicholson, we fell to talking about religion. The ambiance of Thames Television is all that is most calming – a relaxed atmosphere, charming producers, and a studio staff that smiles whenever it is remotely possible to do so. This encourages confidences. Did I, Mrs Nicholson asked, believe in God? My view of God is a simple one, namely that if he exists at all he must be an outstandingly disagreeable old gentleman. This I duly trotted out, together with a suggested name for his habitation, 'Up-alofto'. Did I pray, then, asked Mrs Nicholson, she herself revealing that her prayers used to be that she would become spiritually better and a worthier character. I then had to confess that until I gave up prayer in 1921 my prayers had usually been, as a keen model railwayman, that somebody would unexpectedly give me several yards more track. Nobody ever did and therefore, so depressingly meagre were the results of prayer, I prayed no more. Viewers in large numbers (it was an afternoon programme and so why weren't they doing something more useful?) reached for their pens and an avalanche of tracts, texts, printed prayers and booklets, together with letters, descended on me and is still descending. All polite, strange to say, save one, a cross-patch female believer in a residential hotel ('Go and boil your silly head!'). All written more in sorrow than in anger, with 'poor old you' the general theme. Some of the letters had over 20 biblical references. No letter was shorter than four pages. I answered them all, thinking it impolite not to do so. All the letters assured me repeatedly of the existence and kindly nature of the supreme being, but as I read them, I was struck by the fact that the writers seemed somehow to lack confidence. They protested too much and one seemed to sense behind it all a feeling of insecurity and almost of desperation. Could it be that it was themselves they were trying to persuade as much as poor old unbelieving me?

Disbelief in God doesn't deny one the solid comfort and reassurance obtainable from belief in an earthbound Christ and our midnight mass at Appleton is a pleasurable Christmas feature, though when the carols start I have to absent the mind, so painfully do they stir up the past and times when the future seemed brighter than now. It was the carols that were, of course, partly the undoing of the admirable Mr Heath. The electorate got muddled. It had become accustomed to seeing a spray-soaked figure in sou'wester and jaunty yachting cap and to fixing this breezy chap in their minds as our sailor prime minister (echoes of George V who was always happily known as 'Our Sailor King', and all the world, as we know, loves a sailor). And then suddenly there he was, surpliced and waving a baton as Christians awoke and saluted the happy morn. Then the newspapers showed pictures of a vast grand piano being trundled into No 10 and the muddle was complete. And then there was that voice that to an English ear was so difficult to 'place' (such a shame that that boat had to be called Morning Cloud when there were other Mornings available. Morning Glory, for instance. I do not include Morning Sickness).

I *say*, we've been together now for a year! Thank you for bearing with me. Happy Christmas.

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Letters to the Editor

Labour and Lorries

Sir, C. H. Sharp is certainly correct in saying that there is no reason why railways should be more doctrinally respectable than lorries (NS 3 December). What is sad is that his article added little else to the current debate on transport policy. The most direct question is whether it is in the interests of all concerned that road freight should maintain the status quo that it has so assiduously defended over the past few years into the future. The status quo view is that lorries dominate freight movement and will continue to do so. More than that it is said the numbers of heavy lorries will increase from 600,000 to 800,000 (Transport & Road Research Laboratory) or 920,000 (Dr Sharp) by the year 2000 because of the direct correlation between economic activity and the number of lorries. The increase in numbers will be accompanied by an increase in the size and work done by the lorries of the future. But public opinion clearly will not tolerate any further increase in the environmental nuisance from more and more lorries in the future. Also, there is no justification for building roads to take the extra lorry traffic (as confirmed by Transport Policy Consultation Document Vol. 2 para 7.7), which is usually less than 10 per cent of the total traffic flow. Consequently alternatives must be sought since the threshold of lorry nuisance on existing roads has been reached and new road building is ruled out. So we are talking about *future* growth rather than just a reordering of the present picture. Rail and 'inland shipping' have the proven technology for handling most modern transport requirements and both have the capacity – given investment. As to the size of the problem current long-distance road freight carryings are around 200 million tons (traffic over 50 miles moved by lorries of 5+ tons gross laden weight). Rail long-distance carryings are some 100 million tons and waterborne movements, (estuary, canal and tidal river) about 50 million tons. Therefore shifts between road and other modes would achieve a measurable effect and, given the balance of traffic, more equitable distribution between modes would make a big difference to the freight scene in the future.

Some 1,500 million tons of load freight moves are short distance – largely in smallish vehicles. Some of this is eligible for transfer – such as quarry traffic – but much is local delivery for which there is no alternative and which does not generally cause complaints. Dr Sharp's suggestion that a change in freight policy could only be 'at the expense of fewer jobs on the roads' is purely emotive: there is plenty of scope for all. *Per contra* it can be argued that more rail and water freight workers have lost their jobs in the past 20 years through pro-road policies than could ever be the case with road to rail and water transfers in the future.

When it comes to social costs in general, if, as we have done, you use the Transport Policy Document's figures and revalue them to allow for increases in road freight taxation (April Budget) then you find that the shortfall between tax and track costs is around £90m. As to environmental costs, Transport 2000 commissioned an independent study which showed (on a conservative basis) that £300m. could be attributed to lorries in respect of accidents, noise, pollution and congestion. For this the easier form of tax collection is in the enforcement of effective controls over nuisance rather than by collecting money. Also, the costs avoided by road freight in not complying with EEC present or pending legislation are also very relevant in the equation. Compliance with drivers' hours and tachograph regulations are expected to 'cost' the industry some £400m. each year (FTA figures) – not to mention the costs involved in complying with the forthcoming social legislation affecting 'bonus' payments.

Road freight successfully externalises many of its costs which are met by the community at large. By this criterion, lorries are not the most suitable form of goods transport for our times. We should try to redistribute freight over all modes and then see whether we can reduce the need for otherwise alarming increases in freight movement by intelligent land-use planning. Surely there are no party politics in this approach.

MIKE HARRIS
Operations Manager

Transport 2000
9 Catherine Place
London SW1

Sir, There are further important factors which C. H. Sharp seems to have disregarded in his article 'Labour and Lorries'. The 'leftness' of rail is surely evident to most socialists who are concerned with the quality of life. Trains do not traverse town and village streets damaging houses by vibration, offending the ears and contributing to the slaughter and maiming caused by road accidents. The fact that lorries transgress in all these ways seems to be quite immaterial to their owners whose only interest is in making profits, in this case at the expense of the public good.

In the countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain where all transport is under government control railways are used to their full capacity. It seems unlikely that the economics of rail versus road transport should be basically different in other countries and this preference for rail by the Marxist governments suggests that Dr Sharp has got his sums wrong. He is certainly in error in stating that diesel locomotives are neither more nor less socialist than diesel lorries. In the case of most countries of West Europe and in Britain on such vital links as the London-Midlands-Glasgow route the comparison must be between electric locomotives and diesel lorries. The sheikhs will presumably continue to raise the price of oil over the coming years as supplies continue to grow shorter and the lorry owner will have no option but to pay the fuel price demanded. But the electric train will be propelled by electricity generated by whatever is the most economic means of the moment, which gives a socialist government the freedom to plan ahead in the choice of energy sources such as coal, atomic energy, hydro-electric power, etc.

In Britain we are approaching the apparent aim of our road-biased bureaucracy of a car for every family. Most car drivers would agree that such a car density is just not compatible with the simultaneous presence on the same roads of a vast and increasing fleet of juggernauts. It is an economist's mad dream to try to evaluate the costs of the social ills caused by these monsters. Let us have a referendum so that the general public can say that they will not tolerate this state of affairs any longer.

G. M. BARRETT

Upwey
Sole Street
Gravesend, Kent

Hocking BP

Sir, To put it mildly, the NEW STATESMAN's complacency last week towards Mrs Thatcher's plan – sorry I meant Mr Healey's – to sell part of the Government's stake in BP, is astonishing. You don't even feel compelled to put a clause of expediency on the decision by thinking of it perhaps as a necessary evil, instead you praise the Chancellor's 'initiative' and describe the plan as 'welcome enough'.

What nonsense. There is really no way politically or economically that the sale can be justified. On the political front it is not so long ago that you approved of the Labour Government's noble sounding intention to carry public ownership into *profitable* areas of manufacturing – now you seem to support the policy of taking over the failed and ailing sectors like British Leyland, shipbuilding and machine tool companies, and praise the hiving off to private interests of the boom areas of British industry. The first act the Labour Government did in 1974 was to finish the selling off of the state breweries, begun by Mr Heath, and now with your apparent encouragement it seems to be continuing the trend.

Economically the sale makes little sense either. Only last week a stockbroking firm issued a circular on BP showing that it is one of the 'most sought after shares in the world', estimating that earnings per share will more than double next year, thanks to the North Sea and Alaska, and will have quadrupled by 1979. So if the Government sells now it loses out. And who will buy the shares? If it is British people then it will mean that money that might go for investment and expansion in the private sector (a favourite theme of Mr Healey) will be diverted to buy BP shares. Selling to a foreigner might help the balance of payments burden, but it won't affect the rate at which the money supply is expanding, another favourite theme of Mr Healey's.

PETER HILLMORE

12a Portman Mansions
London W1

In Defence of Magistrates

Sir, In his article 'Labour Challenges the Jury' (NS 10 December) Geoff Robertson has omitted to mention two important factors – time and money – which influenced the James Committee in their recommendation that less serious offences should be dealt with in magistrates' courts rather than before a jury in a Crown Court. It is an indisputable fact that the Crown Court lists are at present heavily overloaded, which results in hearings being delayed for many weeks or even months. It has been estimated that the cost of Crown Court trials is in the region of £600 per hour – including fees for the judge, counsel for the prosecution and defence, salaries for the clerk, probation officers and other court officials, expenses and loss of earnings paid to jury members and witnesses, and the normal overheads of heating, lighting and administration. Surely it is reasonable to try to effect some economies in this great burden on the public purse, by transferring some of the cases to local benches where they can be dealt with adequately and justly by lay magistrates – who, incidentally,

Labour Weekly
CHRISTMAS ISSUE
PULLING THE TORY CRACKERS
THIS THURSDAY 10p
Gets to the heart of matters that matter

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receive no payment for their performance of a public service.

In this connection, I take great exception to Mr Robertson's emotional outburst against lay justices, and his unfounded assertion that they are elderly reactionary conservatives, entirely remote from the general public and inevitably biased in favour of the police – nothing could be further from the truth. He is apparently unaware of present methods of selecting magistrates from a wide cross-section of the community – they are of all ages, of all shades of political opinion, from all classes of society. Their common denominator is that, by reason of their occupation or communal activities, they are felt to have a broad and valuable experience of ordinary people in the ordinary world. Presumably they are also considered to possess the mental ability to hear, understand and assess evidence given in court, and to form a balanced judgment based on that evidence – which is not always true of a jury chosen at random and with no experience of complicated legal procedure (and sometimes unable even to read the oath!).

To suggest that the ordinary citizen has little chance of obtaining a fair trial in magistrates' courts is an insult to a group of people dedicated to the cause of justice, and who give freely of their time and energies in the performance of a necessary, difficult and sometimes unpleasant duty. The innocent need have no fear of hearings before magistrates; the guilty may well feel they have a better chance of pulling the wool over an inexperienced jury's eyes and obtaining an acquittal – but that is not justice.

IRENE RUBACK
Justice of the Peace

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Cliftonville
Margate, Kent

Vivian Galbraith

Sir, Your readers might be forgiven if they deduced from A.J.P. Taylor's affectionate note on Vivian Galbraith (London Diary, 10 December) that he made his period as dry and dull as the 'scraps of paper' he pursued. Quite the opposite. In the late Forties and early Fifties, Galbraith was one – Isaiah Berlin was the other – of the two most popular lecturers and teachers in Oxford. He generated eagerness and excitement wherever he spoke, whether in Schools where he lectured to packed houses, or in the Tackley Café where his table – to the despair of the waitresses – was generally surrounded by hubbub and a jam of rearranged chairs, or in the Stubbs Society where an imperfect paper would be improved with tact and encouragement.

His platform style was extraordinary. If Taylor's is close to the ultimate in immobility, Galbraith was all energy and motion, a mixture of walking race and tennis match. His tiny black-gowned figure hurried from side to side in a series of rallies, the best shots coming at you on the diagonal like crosscourt volleys. Occasionally he would retire to the umpire's chair and his notes for refreshment, then quickly resume his to-and-fro at the net. He must have covered a good two miles during each lecture.

Galbraith handled events and people – kings or clerks – often with irreverence and daring, always with compassion and humour. The great crises and struggles of the Middle Ages tempered and illuminated by constant reference to the conditions, problems and pace of everyday life. He brought the piles of dead documents to life with humanity and colour and set the Public Record in a wider landscape that it alone could suggest. And so for thousands of undergraduates he recharged an interest dimmed by years of National Service, enlarging their understanding of history at a level and in terms which accorded with their maturity and experience. This was Galbraith's great gift and why he will be remembered with gratitude.

DAVID GARDINER

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Bragg's Own Weekly

Sir, Melvyn Bragg's denial (Letters 17 December) of Ian Hamilton's 'modish little jibe' that what is said on *Read All About It* 'is froth' does not stand up to the spectacle of a writer like Margaret Drabble cooing over a ghosted autobiography of the vacuous Twiggy – and other such shuddering spectacles, all examples of that notorious historical phenomenon, the 'treason of the clerks'. Wasn't it Professor Ayer (doing his sycophantic meed on that very programme) who some years ago treated us to printed paroxysms of ecstasy on the subject of professional football?

Read All About It is confined to paperbacks and you would never know from the programme that many of its products have already appeared in hardback. There's an example coming up on 30 December, Colin Wilson's *The Strength to Dream* which I read some ten years ago, advertised on Bragg's programme in the *Radio Times* as Wilson's 'most recent' book 'which was published two weeks ago'. And this is only scratching the surface of this cheap programme, allegedly about literature.

WILLIAM GOLDMAN

Ickneild
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Showing the Flag

Sir, Sebastian Robinson (Letters 17 December) correctly says that Lady Godiva could not have been charged with indecent exposure under the 1824 Vagrancy Act because she did not possess 'a person' (that quaint legal term for the male organ). But she could have been tried for committing an act outraging public decency (a common law offence) – as long as a Peeping Tom had complained and as long as the prosecution could have proved that the act *might* have been seen by one other person.

Nor is Mr Robinson quite correct about 'intent to insult' always being necessary when a man committing indecent exposure comes before the courts. If he is charged under the Town Police Clauses Act, according to *Stone's Justices Manual*, for causing a nuisance in that he did wilfully and indecently expose his person, the prosecution doesn't have to prove he did it in order to insult females. The fact that he did it, for whatever motive and with whatever intention, is enough. As Jeremy Bentham said (NS 10 December) the indecency laws are notoriously odd.

CELIA HADDON

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MR JACK JONES

On 3 September we published an article by Mr Paul Johnson about trade unions which article repeated an allegation made by Mr George F. Smith, a former TUC Chairman, that Mr Jack Jones in his capacity of General Secretary of the TGWU had procured salaried public appointments for Mr Leslie Kemp, National Secretary of the TGWU Construction Group, who had announced his retirement from that office on grounds of ill-health. We subsequently published a letter from Mr G. F. Smith, with which Mr Paul Johnson associated himself, in which Mr Smith acknowledged that his allegation was incorrect and apologised to Mr Jones. We, with Mr Paul Johnson, also entirely accept that Mr Jack Jones had nothing whatever to do with Mr Leslie Kemp's appointments and we apologise to Mr Jones for the publication of this unfounded statement.

Aims For What?

Sir, In the ad. you published last week, Aims for Freedom and Enterprise quote Adolf Hitler's statement that 'basically National Socialism and Marxism are the same'. Perhaps they are unaware of one of Hitler's other doctrines, that of the Big Lie. Alternatively, of course, they understand the latter all too well.

What further teachings of Hitler do Aims for Freedom and Enterprise propose to broadcast in their effort to educate the British public?

G. A. COHEN

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The Great Tradition

Sir, I see that the review you published last year of F. R. Leavis's book *The Living Principle*, by Peter Conrad, has received comment from another reviewer in your columns. 'One of the most lavishly acrimonious attacks on Leavis's critical vocabulary', John Coleman called it (NS 5 November), and he said that 'Mr Hayman's comments on, and quotations from, certain of [*The Living Principle*'s] chapters, along with his establishment of the earlier provenance of some of its parts, supply a useful counterbalance'.

I don't know whether 'earlier provenance' means the discovery that the central section of *The Living Principle* reprints work some of which has been readily available since before the war. If so, not much research was needed only a nodding acquaintance with Leavis's earlier work, together with a reading of the new book. The absence of any such nodding acquaintance permitted Peter Conrad (NS 12 September 1975) to make a fool of himself by using as evidence of Leavis's recent sad decline essays up to 40 years old.

IAN ROBINSON

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Brynmill, Swansea

Illinois and PR

Sir, Mr Anthony Lewis berates me (Letters 26 November) for including Illinois in my warning of the possible perils of PR. He says that 'Illinois elects its congressmen in single-member constituencies, as do other states, and the members of its legislature similarly'. No, not similarly; the former are single-members, but the latter are multi-member districts for the Illinois House of Representatives – 177 seats in 59 districts. It was to this system that I referred, in which each voter has a weighted triple vote, which he can cast either as three votes for one candidate, for two, or for three. It has been alleged by the state chairman of the Illinois Committee for Legislative Reform, Mr Bergstrom, that this system has actually entrenched the nominees of the political caucus, who are always put up for seats where they can be guaranteed the necessary minimum of the vote. Certainly the late Mayor Daley's machine opposed proposals at a constitutional convention in 1970 to abolish cumulative voting and multi-member districts. It was not disinterested opposition. The Illinois system is eccentric, but it is not the only form of PR to be that!

PHILLIP WHITEHEAD

House of Commons
London SW1

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COMING SOON: 1977!

'Very sensual.' —Playboy.

'Don't Miss it.' —Ms.

JANUARY. EVERYBODY IS INVITED TO THE CARTER INAUGURAL. BOB DYLAN WILL SING.

Do you swear that you will uphold that piece of paper, what's it called, the Constitution?

Oh you an' me babe, we're gonna have to part, unless you get some lust in your heart...

He's a good boy, Judge. You name it and he'll do it.

OK, we sold you the bloody car, but now we're **Finished** with you, see? If you want service, go to the Japs.

FEBRUARY. BRITISH CAR INDUSTRY WILL TRY HARDER THAN EVER.

'Beat the anti-Party running dogs of revisionist plotting to a pulp'? What does that mean?

Don't ask me. I just work here.

MARCH. NEW WALL POSTERS WILL APPEAR IN PEKING.

APRIL. THE BUDGET SPEECH WILL BUBBLE WITH NEW IDEAS.

... and a tax on alien journalists to cover deportation costs...

How are you, darling? Welcome to Belgrade. I just got rid of Giscard — oh no, he's still there.

MAY. HEADS OF STATE WILL FEEL THE URGE TO MOVE ABOUT.

JUNE. CYRUS VANCE WILL GO TO THE MIDDLE EAST.

The next Jewish holiday? Probably Tishah B'Av. Why?

See? He's better than Kissinger. Kissinger wouldn't have told us.

JULY. BRITISH CONSULTANTS WILL CALL A GO-SLOW.

What was it you wanted to see Mr Purblind about?

I'm here for a post-mortem. No hurry.

Put something on! You'll catch your death.

So they attacked on Tishah B'Av! Is that my fault? Sue me.

Send us arms and shut up!

AUGUST. CYRUS VANCE WILL GO TO THE MIDDLE EAST.

SEPTEMBER. IVOR RICHARD, IN GENEVA, WILL EXPRESS CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM.

I see no basic disagreement. Everyone wants the same thing. Power.

See? Nothing to it, really.

OCTOBER. THE TORY PARTY WILL STILL BE CONFUSED ABOUT DEVOLUTION.

Devolution — wasn't he President of Ireland?

No, no, that was DeValera. Devolution means the pound is worth $1.23.

Good news! The go-slow has been called off. I can give you an appointment in 1989 or 1998, whichever comes first.

NOVEMBER. A LOT OF CHILDREN WILL BLOW OUT THEIR EYES ON GUY FAWKES DAY.

DECEMBER. THE WORLD'S LEADERS WILL BROADCAST THEIR CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO THE WORLD.

Stick with us, kids — you never had it so good!

We never had it at all.

Of course we did — last Wednesday! But no thanks to **them**.

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V. S. Pritchett

The Vice-Consul

Under the blades of the wide fan turning slowly in its Yes-No tropical way, the Vice-Consul sloped in his office, a soft and fat man, pink as a ham, the only pink man in the town, and pimpled by sweat. He was waiting for the sun to go down into the clouds over the far bank of the estuary, ten miles wide here, and to put an end to a bad week. He had been plagued by the officers and crew of a Liverpool ship, the *Ivanhoe*, smoking below in the harbour. There was trouble about shipping a puma. His Indian clerk put his head in at the door and said in the whisper of the tropics:

'Mr McDowell's here.'

Years at this post on the river had reduced the Vice-Consul's voice also to the same sort of whisper, but he had a hoarseness that gave it rank. He believed in flying off the handle and showing authority by using allusions which his clerk could not understand.

'Not the bloody 23rd Psalm from that blasted tramp again,' he said and was glad McDowell heard it as he pushed in earnestly after the clerk. McDowell was a long-legged man with an unreasonable chin and emotional knees.

'I've brought Felden's licence,' he said.

'I ought to have had it a week ago,' said the Vice-Consul. 'Have you got the animal aboard yet? It was on the dock moaning away all day. You could hear it up here.'

'We've got it on deck,' said McDowell.

'Typical hunter,' said the Vice-Consul, 'thinking he could ship it without a licence. They've no feeling for animals and they're liars too.'

'No hearts,' said McDowell.

At this low hour at the end of the day, the Vice-Consul did not care to have a ship's officer trump his own feelings.

It was part of the Vice-Consul's martyrdom during his eight years at the port that he was, so to say, the human terminus on whom hunters, traders, oil men, television crews, sailors whose minds had been inflated by dealing with too much geography, dumped their boasts. Nature in the shape of thousands of miles of jungle, flat as kale, thousands of miles of river, tributaries, drifting islands of forest rubbish, not to mention millions of animals, snakes, blood-sucking fish, swarms of migrating birds, butterflies and biting insects, had scared them and brought them down the river to unload their fantasies.

'Take your boa-constrictor . . .', they began. 'Take your alligator . . . Take your marching ant . . .'

Now he had to 'take' a man called Felden who had tried to stuff him up with the tale that his 14-year-old son had caught the beast on his fishing line in a backwater above Manaos. The Vice-Consul was a sedentary man and longed to hear a fact.

'When do you sail?' he said when McDowell sat down on an upright chair which was too small for him.

'The day after tomorrow,' said McDowell.

'I can't say I'll be sorry to see you lot go,' said the Vice-Consul, making his usual speech to departing sailors. 'I'd like to know where the hell your company gets its crews.'

'I'm from Belfast,' said McDowell, placing his hands on those knees.

'Oh nothing personal,' said the Vice-Consul. He stamped the licence, pushed it across his desk and stood up; but McDowell did not move. He leaned forward and said:

'Would you do me a favour?'

'What favour?' said the Vice-Consul, offended.

McDowell started to caress his knees as if to get their help.

'Would you be able to recommend a dentist in the town?' he said.

The Vice-Consul sat down, made a space on his desk and said:

'Well, that's a change. I thought you were going to tell me you had got yourself clapped like the rest of your crew and wanted a doctor. Dentist? Afraid not. There isn't a dentist in the place, not one I'd recommend, anyway. You've been here three weeks and can see for yourself. Half the population have no teeth at all. None of the women anyway. Go down the street and, if you're not careful, you can walk straight down their throats.'

McDowell nodded. The Vice-Consul wanted more than a nod.

'It stands to reason,' he said, expanding. 'What do they get to eat? Dried meat and manioc covered in bird droppings, fish that tastes of newspaper from the bloody river. No fresh milk, no fresh meat, no fresh vegetables – everything has to be flown in and they can't afford it. It would kill them if they could.'

McDowell shook his head and kept his knees still.

'Catholic country,' he said.

'No top soil,' said the Vice-Consul, puting on a swagger. 'If you've got a pain in the jaw I'm sorry. Take my advice and do what I do. Get on the next plane to Miami. Or Puerto Rico if you like. It'll cost you a penny or two but its the only way. Sorry for you. Painful.'

'Oh,' said McDowell, sitting back like an idol. 'My teeth are all right,' he said.

'Then what do you want a dentist for?'

'It's my dentures,' McDowell said, gleaming as he made the distinction.

'All right – dentures,' said the Vice-Consul.

'They've gone. Stolen.'

The Vice-Consul looked at McDowell for a long time. The jaws did not move: so he turned sideways and now studied McDowell, screwing up one annoyed eye. The man swallowed.

'Mr McDowell,' he said, taking the syllables one by one. 'Are you feeling the heat? Just give your mouth a tap. If I'm not mistaken you're wearing them.'

McDowell let his arms fall to his sides and parted his lips: a set of teeth gleamed as white and righteous as a conjuring trick.

'I never sail without me spares,' he said.

The Vice-Consul wasn't going to stand funny business from British subjects. He had an air for this.

'Very wise,' he said. 'You fellows are always getting your teeth knocked out by your pals. Makes you careful, I suppose. What do you want *me* to do? You've got a captain, haven't you?'

He became suspicious.

'I suppose you're not thinking of Filing an Official Complaint,' he said, pulling a form out of his drawer, waving it at McDowell and putting it back, 'because I can tell you, officially, that who pinches what from whom on the bloody *Ivanhoe* is no concern of mine, unless it's connected with mutiny, wounding, murder or running guns.'

The Vice-Consul knew this kind of speech by heart.

The sun had floundered down into the clouds: he shouted to his clerk to put on the light, but himself switched it on. He decided to match McDowell on the meaning of words.

'You said "stole", McDowell. You must have some prize thieves in your crew. But will you tell me how you get a set of dentures out of a man's head against his will, even when he's asleep, unless he's drugged or tied up. Were you drunk?'

'I've never touched a drop in my life,' said McDowell.

'I suppose not,' said the Vice-Consul coldly.

'I took them out myself. I always put my dentures in a glass.'

'So I should hope,' said the Vice-Consul. 'filthy leaving them in. Dangerous too. What else did they take? Watch? Wallet? Glasses?'

McDowell spoke carefully, picking over the peculiarity of an austere and personal case.

'Only my dentures,' he said. 'It wasn't the crew. I don't mix with them. They read magazines. They never think. I wasn't aboard,' he said softly adding to his mystery. 'It wasn't at night. I was ashore. In the afternoon. Off duty.'

The Indian clerk put his head in at the door and looked anxiously from McDowell to the Vice-Consul.

'What d'you want now? Can't you see I'm busy?' said the Vice-Consul.

The man's head disappeared and he shut the door.

McDowell stretched his long arms and placed his hands on his knees and his fingers began to drag at his trousers.

'I saw it with my own eyes,' he said. 'I saw this girl with them. When the rain started.'

'What girl?' the Vice-Consul said, lighting a cigar and putting a haze of smoke between himself and his torment. 'The rainy season started six weeks ago,' he swaggered. 'You get your thunderstorm every afternoon. They come in from the west and build up over the river at two o'clock to the minute and last till ten past three. You can set your watch by them.'

The Vice-Consul owned the climate.

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'Tropical rain,' he said grandly, 'not the drizzle you get in Belfast. The rain comes down hot, straight out of the kettle, floods the streets and dries up in ten minutes, not a sign of it except the damn trees grow a foot higher. The trouble is that it doesn't clear the air: the heat is worse afterwards. You feel you're breathing – I don't know – boiled stair carpet my wife says, but that's by the way.'

He waved away the smoke.

'You'll tear the knees of those trousers of yours if you don't leave them alone.'

A dressy man, he pointed his cigar at them. McDowell's knees stuck out so far that the Vice-Consul, who was a suspicious man, felt that they were making a displeasing personal claim on him. They indeed gave a jump when McDowell said in a voice that had the excitement of sudden fever.

'I can stand thunder,' he said, shouting. 'But I can't stand lightning, sheet or forked. It brings my dinner up. It gets under your armpits. A gasometer went up in Liverpool when I was a boy and was blown blazing across the Mersey . . .'

'I thought you said you came from Belfast,' said the Vice-Consul. 'Lightning never bothers me.'

'There was this thunderbolt,' said McDowell, ignoring him and his voice went to a whisper:

'I'm in the entrance of this hotel, looking at the alligator handbags to take one home for my wife and I've just picked one up and down comes this bolt, screaming behind my back, with a horrible violet flame and sends me flying head first up the passage. There's a girl there, polishing the floor, and all the lights go out. The next thing I'm in an open doorway, I'm pitching head first on to a bed in the room and I get my head under the clothes. It's like the end of the world and I'm praying into the pillow. I think I am dead, don't I?'

'I don't know,' said the Vice-Consul coldly. 'But what do you do at sea? And where was this place?'

'It's natural at sea,' said McDowell calming down. 'The Columbus. Yes, it would be the Columbus.'

'Never heard of it,' said the Vice-Consul.

'I don't know how long I am there, but when it gets quieter I look up, the lightning is going on and off in the window and that's when I see this girl standing by the mirror . . .'

'The one who was polishing the floor, I suppose,' said the Vice-Consul with contentment.

'No,' said McDowell, 'this one was in the bed when I fell on it, on top of her, I told you.'

'You didn't. You pulled her in,' said the Vice-Consul.

McDowell stopped, astonished, but went on:

'Standing by the mirror, without a stitch of clothing on her. Terrible. She takes my dentures out of the glass and the next thing she opens her mouth wide and she's trying to fit them, this way and that, to her poor empty gums.'

'You couldn't see all that in a flash of lightning. You must have switched the light on,' said the Vice-Consul.

McDowell slapped his knee and sat back in a trance of relief.

'You're right,' he said gratefully. 'Thank God you reminded me. I wouldn't want to tell a lie. The sight of her with her poor empty mouth destroyed me. I'll never forget it. It'd break a man's heart. . . .'

'Not mine,' said the Vice-Consul. 'It's disgusting. Shows ignorance too. No two human jaw bones are alike.'

'The pitiful ignorance, you're right!' said McDowell. 'I called out to her "Careful what you're doing. You might swallow them. Put them back in the glass and come back into bed".'

The tropical hoarseness left the Vice-Consul's voice. He gave a shout.

'Ah,' he shouted and put his cigar down. 'I thought we'd come to it. In plain English you had come ashore to commit fornication.'

'I did not,' said McDowell, shocked. 'Her sister works for the Air Line.'

'Oh it's no business of mine. I don't care what you do, but you were in bed with that girl. You said so yourself. But why in God's name did you take your dentures out? In the middle of the afternoon?'

McDowell was even more shocked. He sat back sternly in his chair. 'It would have looked hardly decent,' he said, 'I mean on an *occasion* like that, for any man to keep his teeth in when a poor girl had none of her own. It was politeness. You'd want to show respect. I've got my principles.' He became confidential and said:

'My dentures have gold clips: metal attracts lightning, I mean if you had your mouth open you might be struck dead. That's another reason why I took them out. You never know who the Lord will strike.'

'Both of you, I expect,' said the Vice-Consul.

'Yes,' said McDowell, 'but you've got to think of others.'

The Vice-Consul got out his handkerchief and wiped his face and his head.

'You'd never get away with this twaddle in a court of law,' said the Vice-Consul. 'None of this proves she stole your dentures.'

'She had gone when I woke up and they had gone. The rain was pouring down outside or I would have gone after her,' said McDowell.

'And you wouldn't have caught her if you had,' said the Vice-Consul with deep pleasure. 'She sold them before she got to the end of the street. You can say goodbye to that lot. You're wasting my time. I've got two other British ships docking in an hour. I've told you what to do. Keep clear of the police. They'll probably arrest you. And if you want a new set of dentures go to Miami as I said.'

'But they're not for *me*,' exclaimed McDowell. 'I want them for this girl. I've got the money. It's wrong to steal. Her sister knows it and so does she. If you see a soul in danger you've got to try and save them.'

'God help me,' said the Vice-Consul. 'I've got enough trouble in this port as it is, but as a matter of interest, who told you to go to this place – the Columbus – to buy handbags? You can get them at every shop in the town. The river's crawling with alligators.'

McDowell nodded to the outer office where the Indian clerk sat.

'That gentleman.'

'He did, did he?' said the Vice-Consul, laughing for the first time and achieving a louder shout to his clerk.

The Indian clerk came in. He loved to be called in when the Vice-Consul was talking business. He gleamed with the prestige of an only assistant. The Vice-Consul spoke to him in Portuguese with the intimacy of one who sketches his way through a language not his own. The clerk nodded and nodded and talked eagerly.

'My clerk says,' said the Vice-Consul, in his large way, 'that you came in at midday the day before yesterday and asked where you could get a girl. He says he knows the Air Line girl and her sister. He knows the whole family. The father has the barber's shop opposite the church and he is a dentist too. He buys up teeth, mostly after funerals.'

The clerk nodded and added a few words.

'He says he fixed him up. He says this man's got the biggest collection of teeth in the town.'

The clerk's neck was thin; he was like wood. He opened his mouth wide with pride for McDowell to see. There were five sharp steel teeth and two with gold in them.

The Vice-Consul went on: 'He says he often sells them to missionaries. The Dominicans have a mission here. The poor devils come back from far up in the Indian settlements looking like skeletons after three years and with their teeth dropping out. I told you: no calcium. No fresh vegetables. No milk. The climate . . .'

The Indian said more.

McDowell got up and moved towards the clerk suspiciously, setting his chin.

'What's he say about the Dominicans?' said McDowell in a threatening way.

The Vice-Consul said:

'He says you could go down to this man, this barber chap and you might find your teeth.'

The Indian nodded.

'If you don't, well, they've been snapped up and are being flown up the river. Sorry, McDowell, that's all we can do. Take my advice and get back double quick to your ship. Good day.'

The Vice-Consul picked up some papers and called to McDowell as he left the room.

'They'll be up there, preaching The Word.'

The following day the Vice-Consul went out to the *Ivanhoe* to have a last drink with the captain and to have a look at the puma and grinned when it opened its mouth and snarled at him. The captain said McDowell would be all right once he got to sea and went on to some tale about a man who claimed to have a cat that backed horses.

It's the bloody great river that does it, the Vice-Consul thought, as he was put ashore afterwards and as he walked home in the dark and saw all the people whispering in their white cotton clothes, looking like ghosts. He was thinking it was only another year before his leave and that he was the only human being in the town.

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Alan Watkins

Tips For Tipplers

Dr Johnson found it easier to be abstemious than temperate, so in his later years he drank nothing alcoholic at all, though he continued to eat a good deal. The only time of year when I do not have the same difficulty – when I find it easy enough to be temperate – is Christmas. For one thing, I visit my parents in Wales, where I drink a little sherry, a little beer, a little port and perhaps one or two glasses of wine. ('One or two glasses of wine' is the euphemism commonly employed by people who have virtuously given up spirits and delude themselves that they are consequently on the wagon. What they really mean is 'one or two bottles'. Here I mean 'one or two glasses'.) On my return to London I feel much better.

And, for another thing, in the week or so before Christmas (the preliminary period seems to grow longer with every year), normal, civilised drinking in pubs and wine bars becomes virtually impossible. The regulars, the professionals, the hard men are forced out of their haunts by hordes of amateurs, shouting at the tops of their voices, sometimes wearing false noses or funny hats, ordering enormous rounds, recklessly mixing their drinks and, worst of all, having in tow gaggles of secretaries. Do not misunderstand me. This last observation is neither frivolous nor sexist. I am all in favour of secretaries or anyone else having a drink, or several drinks, if they want to. Indeed not the least merit of the wine bars is that women seem to feel freer to go into them than into pubs. What happens at Christmas is something quite different. Young girls whose normal tipple is lager-and-lime or something have a gin here, a whisky there, a Cointreau ('never tried that before') somewhere else; the next thing you hear is: 'I think I'm going to be sick.'

'Oh my God, Sandra's going to be sick. Get her out of here quick, somebody. Bill, she's your responsibility really. After all, she does work in Forward Planning.'

'I want to go home.'

'Keep calm, Sandra love, and hold your breath.'

Retching in the ladies', vomiting on the pavement: men of sense avoid (genuinely pathetic) scenes of this kind, and drink instead in their own residences.

But what kind of drink? Let me draw a preliminary distinction between proper drinks and non-proper drinks. (There is a similar distinction to be drawn between proper and non-proper jobs. Many politicians, you will discover, have never had a proper job in their lives. Edward Heath and Tony Benn are both examples.) The proper drink criterion was, I think, invented by Kingsley Amis, whose *On Drink* (Panther 60p) remains the best introduction to the whole subject. However, I would draw the line slightly differently from Amis. His test is that a drink which does not taste like a drink is not a proper drink. Thus Campari is not a proper drink. I agree with that. It tastes of cough mixture that has been used as a marinade for parsley-and-thyme stuffing, with a touch of gall and wormwood thrown in. Besides, it is, for some reason I have never been able to understand, excessively expensive, whether you buy it at a bar or in a bottle. But Amis's criterion would surely exclude all vodka-based drinks, including the Bloody Mary, to the manufacture of which he devotes a lot of careful attention (the secret, it seems, is to add a little tomato ketchup) and which is indubitably a proper drink.

My own definition excludes drinks which are deliberately outré or fantastical – which do not, so to speak, conform to classical or indeed any known canons. It further excludes drinks for which the mixing, manufacturing or constructional process takes precedence over the drink itself. The *Observer*'s women's pages (for which I have no responsibility whatever) are, I see, recommending their readers to mix rum not with Coke but with cocoa. The result is, it seems, called 'Pirate's Punch'. If you think you are going to like that kind of thing, well and good; if not, not. Not for me. Similarly, though I enjoy cooking, I do not see the point of fiddling around with hot saucepans of claret, quarter bottles of brandy, quarts of dry cider and enough nutmeg, mace, cinammon and whatever to make several Christmas puddings.

Leaving punch aside, which is the best place to leave it, let us progress to the serious, the proper drinks. The two that people associate with Christmas are, I suppose, port and brandy. Now, Dr Johnson's hackneyed quotation apart, both these drinks have one thing in common. Just as children often say: 'Don't like parsnips (or turnips, or swedes, or all of them)' so experienced drinkers, hard men, also often say: 'Can't take port (or brandy, or both of them). Find it doesn't agree with me.' For myself I have always found whisky rather more deleterious. But this by the way. The immediate point is that port and brandy should be approached with caution, as to quantity consumed, I mean.

If you are a regular brandy-drinker already you will know what you want and like. If not, decide whether you can afford over £5 (for 3-star brandy) or over £7 (for VSOP, or Very Special Old Pale). Go for Remy Martin, 5-star Hine (though the 3-star Hine is good as well) or, my own favourite, Delamain; take full advantage of Heath's only triumph, the abolition of RPM.

The same procedure applies to the other spirits and also to champagne: Mercier is a particularly good buy at about £3 a bottle, and Tesco used to do a very pleasant champagne called Maison Royale. Shop around. Many wine-merchants now recognise that the various cut-price establishments provide better value in spirits. They have prim little explanatory notes in their lists saying they are primarily dealers in wine, and sell spirits virtually as a social service for the convenience of their customers.

However, I do not want to be at all scornful of wine merchants. Admittedly the old advice 'Trust your wine merchant' is silly, not so much because wine merchants are untrustworthy (which on the whole they are not), or even because most people do not have a wine merchant at all, as because 'Give me some nice claret at around £1.50 a bottle' is a silly request. Moreover, it takes all the fun out of wine-buying. Nevertheless wine merchants have several advantages compared to off-licences and supermarkets: a bigger choice; free delivery on 12 bottles or more; discounts for quantity; and very generous credit. The last two advantages rarely coexist: discounts are usually given only for cash-with-order; and it is a nice exercise in inflation accounting to decide whether it is preferable to pay less now or more later. If you deal with several wine merchants you can obtain quite a lot of wine on credit and so organise your drinking on dangerously Harold Lever-like economic lines.

But to return to port. This is not the place to go into the differences among vintage, crusted, late-bottled vintage, tawny and ruby. I will say merely that if I had £4 to spend (at the margin, as the economists put it) I would sooner buy a bottle of vintage port than of spirits. Go for 1963 or earlier, and look out for the lesser-known shippers such as Martinez, Smith Woodhouse, Noval or Rebello Valente: their wines tend to be cheaper than, and just as good as, Cockburn's or Taylor's. Some people say that decanting is unnecessary – or, alternatively, that you should stop pouring into the decanter when the wine (the bottle having first been stood vertically for 24 hours) begins to go cloudy. If you follow either course you will waste quite a bit of port mixed with the sediment. So get hold of a plastic funnel and a clean handkerchief rinsed in water, and pour away steadily until you have your full £4 worth.

Lastly, wine. There is a very boring dispute about the kind of wine, red or white, and what sort of red or white, to drink with Christmas dinner. If you were eating tarragon chicken served with watercress and new potatoes, I suppose you would want white, though I should still prefer red. (Both Roy Jenkins and Auberon Waugh – I pass the information on for what it is worth – drink red wine with fish.) But with sausages, bacon, stuffing, there is really no argument: red; and *a fortiori* if you are having duck or goose.

But, red or white, there is the question of value-for-money. At current rates of duty and VAT and with various fixed costs allowed for, the value of wine in a bottle costing £1.25 is 13p; in a bottle costing £2 it is 66p. Sam Brittan tells me that the rational economic course is to buy the most expensive wine you can afford. I do not think it is quite as simple as this. Because (VAT apart) the extra charges are fixed, the additional increment of value you obtain with every further 10p you spend becomes progressively smaller. You are getting better value, certainly: but you are

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getting it at a decreasing rate. It is a highly subtle problem of cost-benefit. I would not think it worth spending, say, £8 on a bottle of wine even if I could afford it.

If you are buying at a supermarket or off-licence, the best guide is the shipper. Suppose a well-known chain calling itself, say, Salisburys of Hatfield is selling something labelled 'Nuits St Georges 1970': avoid it unless you had it before, and liked it. Avoid it even more if there is no vintage-date appended. (For some reason, the most lethal purplish brews are concocted in the name of Nuits St Georges.) If, on the other hand, a burgundy carries the Bouchard or Geisweiler label it is almost certainly drinkable. For claret, Calvet, Lebegue, Cordier or (the Bordeaux scandal notwithstanding) Cruse. Sichel is reliable for everything. F. and E. May are good. F. and S. Matta seem to import nice Rhone and Italian wines. Percy Fox is very reliable on hock, as are both Hugel and Dopff – these are separate firms – on Alsatian wines.

But the best value – and I am now back on the reds – tends to come from outside France: from Spain (look for a Rioja Alavesa), Portugal, Argentina and, above all, Chile, whose claret is supposed to taste like pre-phylloxera French claret. In matters of drink I do not discriminate between totalitarian states whether of the Right or of the Left. Thus Yugoslavia does excellent reds (one firm of specialists is French and Foreign Wines, 10 St James's Place, S.W.1.). The same goes for Bulgaria and Rumania besides the more familiar Hungary. Not only French but, I fear, Italian wines also are over-priced by comparison. Still, there is a case for extravagance at Christmas, though, as I say, I shall be drinking beer in Wales.

One final thing: make sure you get a decent corkscrew. It will last much, much longer than any bottle. It will also save trouble and avoid nasty rows about incompetence and whose fault it was that the cork got stuck.

Eric Korn

The Way We Eat Now

Yes, but who would have predicted Horror Food? By which I don't mean horrible food – three kidney basins in the guidebooks, worth a special journey to avoid. I mean Frankenstein Fudge, Dracula Cherryade, Corpse Candies and Jack the Ripper fondants in intriguing visceral shapes. Because it's on its way, a cloud no bigger than a man's skull.

So far this gastronomic bloodlust has only reached the icy realm of the lolly, whose toddler market, novelty-hungry like so many tiny Athenians, demand scores of new flavours, or at least new names, every month. So when they had exhausted all the rational combinations of surprise, delight, delirium and so forth, the confectioners turned first to futurism: Skyray, Laser Lolly, Strontium Surprise and Blaster Blocks with positronic topping. Now these are spent, and they are trying the fashionable vein of neo-Satanism: Haunted House, Beelzebubble, gum, Frightfingers and Nightmare Noshettes.

And if this – and the new angst of 63 flavours – isn't enough to make buying an ice-cream one of the great experiences to evade, there is a special line whose very names produce instant aphonia on the adult tongue. ('You ask, Dad, I'm shy.' Special resonant basso profundo, adrip with masculinity: 'It seems, ha-hah, we'd like a Lolly-gobble Chocbomb and a Super Sticky Swisho.' 'Yes, sir, and what's the little boy having?').

But what are all these acrylic-coloured ICI-flavoured non-ice non-creams about anyway? In my day you stuck a large pasteboard W in the window, and the tricycle man came and offered strawberry or vanilla and that was your lot. Or entrancingly simple and vapid waterices in reassuring British colours and of triangular cross-section, which made an early Pythagorean of me (these days lollies are shaped like art-deco wurlitzers). But that was in the misty antebellum; came the war and illegal concoctions of turnip-flour from black-market kitchens in Dollis Hill, simultaneously sickly and abrasive. The war simplified a child's choice: soft drinks in anonymous bottles, whose brand could only be guessed at, and we learned like tiny conscripts that there were only three kinds of sweets: Mars, Crunchies, and them that has sticky centres. And yet despite this, juvenile society was as firmly based on sweets as Papuan on pigs; universal medium of value and exchange, conferrers of status, objects of veneration, currency of an elaborate moral and social system. Sweets rewarded virtue or luck; the last frame of every *Dandy* cartoon strip showed the hero up to his shoulders in humbugs or behind a table concave with iced buns. Nowadays he just pockets a ten pound note: I blame the dentists myself, though the crisp manufacturers have a lot to answer for.

It's odd, the sudden flick of popular taste from sweet to savoury. The interior of the local sweetshop, which used to look like a Venusian geology museum, is now a dispensary of uniformly bright, clinically boring packets, their contents veiled; while weird toasted flakes of carbohydrate, crisp salty fragments in ever more improbably baroque shapes, chips from the bench of a mad fretwork artist, glint enticingly through their diaphanous wrappings. Peanut-butter flavoured tetrahedra, kipper triangles, barbecued baked-bean boomerangs. (The flavours, though unpredictable, are always homely; marmite, bacon 'n' eggs, sardines on toast; curry crisps, an obvious brainwave, flopped.)

Pop food tastes have changed in a hundred ways, nearly all for the better, and local and class differences seem to be vanishing. There used to be a simple dichotomy: food was either a means of discipline, or it wasn't there. Now embourgeoisement and nostalgia lead to a mid-region of edibility. Most startling of all, kids like school dinners, and a whole vocabulary of insult has grown obsolete. There are children maturing in this city who have never had cold rice pudding slapped about their ears, and more battered fish fingers than battered babies. Spare the cod and spoil the child: it can't be good for morale. Likewise parents have abandoned the bracing belief that milk is only good for you if warm and half coagulated; consequently the stuff gets guzzled by the gallon, which is why contemporary English children are so large and dangerous.

Worse still, they eat fruit for afters. Who can escape an Ozymandiac gloom as we survey the ruins of an empire on which the blancmange never set, the far-distant frontiers guarded by castellated suet puddings, moated with golden syrup, breathing defiance to turbanned and turbulent tribes who knew not tapioca and custard? The imperial junket is over, and into the vacuum seeps an inexorable tide of chicken chowmein and mushroom biryani, tandooris moving ponderously as tanks over the defeated cuisine. But of course the locals are domesticating the intruders just as the Anglo-Saxons did to the Normans, coming in here with their pansified ways and beef and pork and mutton, nasty foreign muck.

Already anything will pass as Chinese food if it comes in large portions and small pieces; the only permitted exoticism is in the menu. I knew a Chinese take-out in Liverpool that offered every conceivable permutation of its dozen or so basics: the menu spread from a neat plaque behind the counter to cover the walls, the ceiling, and most of the exposed surfaces of the house next door; number 477 stewed chicken *and* mushroom *and* pineapple *and* almonds *and* onion *and* tomato *and* prawn *and* pork soft noodles – it sank eventually under the weight of its own diversity, a lesson to us all, I expect. Asian grub is everywhere: even Bangor, even Ayr, there's a Nanking Nosherama in Inverness. Perhaps in some lonely coot-infested broad, on some dolorous porridge-eating Western Isle, a new Hereward, a new Prince Over The Water is arising to restore the hegemony of toad-in-the-hole or bread-and-butter pudding. Or on the other hand, please God, not. The new eclecticism will become the new orthodoxy, and children will be told to eat up their pilao and not hanker after nasty English muck.

Whether the next new taste sensation comes from Malaysia or Missouri (there's a take-out rijsttafel in Praed Street, and a sudden upsurge in non-toxic hamburgers), it will likely be our last Indian Summer of orality before the night descends of soy and chlorella protein. And beyond that again the ultimate in conservation, each of us equipped with unangelic wings packed with symbiotic green cells to photosynthesise our own, pasturing in the neotropical sun for a regimented three hours a day and injecting ourselves with phosphate and aphid spray in a world too crowded for agriculture. Relish your kebabs children, for the night cometh when no man may eat.

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Kingsley Amis

A Reunion

Dear Bill, *To confirm – we meet*
At the Allied Services Club,
6 Upper Greenhill Street
(Opposite Farringdon Tube),
On Friday 11th July
Any time after 6 p.m.;
Informal – but wear a tie!
Yours very sincerely, Jim.

Thirty years ago
Jim had been Sergeant Woods,
The chap you did well to know
If you wanted some over-the-odds
Bit of kit, travel warrant, repair;
A lot came his way from his friend
The O.C., Major MacClure –
One of those who had 'hoped to attend'.

I hoped so too, on the whole,
As I started off: you could say
That Sandy MacClure was a real
Panjandrum of shits on his day,
But the bugger could get you to laugh:
Killing take-offs of his mates,
The booby-traps sprung on the Staff,
That truck-load of Yank cigarettes.

Jim was a quieter lad,
Ever willing to reminisce
About life in Hyderabad,
And also to take the piss;
A fine bloody pair they were
(My Christ, how they screwed around)
To remember so loud and clear,
But others soon came to mind:

Slosher Perkins, disciple of Marx,
With his pamphlets and posters; Burnett
(Was he one of the company clerks?),
The booziest sod of the lot;
Young Taylor, obstreperous enough
In spite of that choirboyish look;
Shy little Corporal Clough,
Who would talk about Shelley and Blake.

And behind them a hundred more
With a background of pay-parades,
The Naafi, the technical store,
Being lectured about grenades,
Guard-mountings, vehicle pools,
Defaulters, inspections of kit
And barrack-rooms, spares and tools,
And gas-capes and God knows what.

Then farmyards and cobbled roads
Full of sun, fresh fruit, village wells,
Tents pitched in the leaf-strewn woods,
Slow crossing of iced-up canals,
Those seasons, that mutable scene
Trodden through in the end – all that,
Plus litres of lager and wine
And a sniff or so at the frat.*

II
Now, up a green-linoed stair,
Past walls in need of a wash
I went, turned a corner, and there
Was Jim, with a grey moustache
And a belly, but still – 'Good God!'
I said, 'you look just the same,
You treacherous, miserable sod!'
'I'm sorry,' he said – 'what's the name?'

Soon seen to. The place had the look
Of a rather expensive canteen:
Sandwiches, cakes and cake,
Card-tables, a fruit-machine,
A fag-machine and a bar.
This served in effect, I found,
Scotch, gin and tonic, and beer;
You worked hard to stand your round.

Oh, one other drink, ginger ale,
Stood before my incredulous eye.
'So what are you up to, Bill?
Tom Burnett. – No, I kissed it good-bye
When my liver went up the creek:
Had to settle for this instead;
You still have the company, like.
– Harry Clough? Nice fellow. He's dead.'

It went on for an hour, about,
To the point where a half-known face
Shoved itself forward to shout,
'This beer's a bloody disgrace,
And you can't even get bloody served!'
Jim coped. The chap who had been
Young Taylor was quite well preserved,
Though his jowls were a little wan.

That was sort of the signal for scoff;
'It shows you how things have changed:
Back then, he'd have had to fuck off
Or get handled,' – Perkins had ranged
His cardboard plate next to mine –
'But you can't really do that now,
And it isn't just auld lang syne;
As if we've grown up, somehow.'

Clifford Perkins (Slosher as was)
Said society's values were more
And more unencumbered, because
No bugger could save the entire
Class structure from final decay.
I waited for Jim to respond
In the old familiar way,
But he nodded and smiled and yawned.

With the coffee and cake and cakes
Came the speeches, which finally squashed
A discussion of heart-attacks;
The first on his feet was sloshed,
And Jim had him off them again,
Quite politely, in five seconds flat.

'Fraternisation' between Allied troops and German nationals, including females, was forbidden by order of General Eisenhower in 1944. Phrases like 'a piece of frat' soon became current.

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This would all have been funny then,
I said to myself, or it might.

The second and third and the rest
Stood sober enough and to spare
On things like the lately deceased
And how lucky we were to be there;
I was turning my thoughts to booze
When that side of it came to an end:
Ex-major MacClure – 'Cheers, boys!' –
Had realised his hope to attend.

He had changed very little: he wore
Bifocals now, but his face
Was as sharply defined as before,
His hair still abundant; his voice
Was the same semi-muted shout
When he talked, as he did for a while,
Of blokes I knew nothing about;
And, by God, he had kept up his style.

I finally got a word through:
Had he run into Nicholls at all?
(A privilege granted to few
Is meeting a pratt on the scale
Of Nicholls: by common consent
A nitwit not fit to shift shit;
Whether more of a bastard or cunt,
Views varied, one has to admit.)

None who saw it could ever forget
MacClure as he took Nicholls off:
Him bumming your last cigarette,
His frown, then his clangorous laugh,
But now, as I mentioned the name
And a bunch of us stood at the bar,
Sandy announced with aplomb
That they met now and then for a jar.

Disbelief, rather broadly expressed,
Was called for, but not even Jim
Seemed shocked or surprised in the least,
So I said, 'A jar with *him*?
You must be out of your – hey!
I remember you swearing, back then,
They could come and take you away
If you ever drank with him for fun.'

'Oh yes?' said MacClure. 'Well, you know
How it is – you exaggerate. And
It was all a long time ago;

Now we're older, we understand
Other blokes, or some of us do.
One thing about Nicholls, Bill,
He always stuck up for you,
And you needed a spot of goodwill.'

He spoke at his customary pitch,
And with his customary grin.
Not much later, Jim looked at his watch
And mentioned packing it in.
No one suggested a song –
Well, no one still there was tight,
And the lads started getting along
(Bar those booked in for the night).

III
What had brought us together before
Was over, no doubt about that;
What had held us together was more
Than, whether you liked it or not,
Going after a single aim,
One procedure laid down from above;
In their dozens, no two the same,
Small kinds and degrees of love.

And that was quite natural then,
When to do what we had to do
Showed us off perfectly, when
We were not so much young as new,
With some shine still on us, unmarked
(At least only mildly frayed),
When everything in us worked,
And no allowances made.

So, when one of us had his leave stopped,
Was awarded a dose of the clap
Or an extra guard, or was dropped
Up to his ears in the crap,
Or felt plain bloody browned off,
He never got left on his own:
The others had muscle enough
To see that he soldiered on.

Disbandment has come to us
As it comes to all who grow old;
Demobilised now, we face
What we faced when we first enrolled.
Stand still in the middle rank!
See you show them a touch of pride –
Left-right, left-right, bags of swank –
On the one-man pass-out parade.

PROFILES

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'It's perfectly disgraceful,' said the Widow Twankey, plunging her hands into the mixing bowl, 'the way your competitions reflect the sexual bias inherent in capitalism itself.'

'Oh no it isn't,' we protested, cheerfully.

'Oh yes it is!' she shrieked, in her mild-mannered way, 'Men, men, men – I've had them till I'm just about up to here with 'em. Your Callaghans, your Healeys, your Croslands, your James Hunts, your Rod Stewarts, your basically male-dominated establishment ethic. Give me your Shulamith Firestone any day of the week. I mean it.'

'Oh no you don't,' we chorussed, amiably.

'Oh yes I do!' she retorted, plunging a giant fork into a ten-foot sausage. 'It's time we women stood up and were counted. Take 1976, for instance, absolutely vital roles were played by women throughout.'

'Oh no they weren't,' we yelled, feebly.

'Oh yes they were,' she flung back, pelting the audience with outsize marrows, 'for instance, *One*! Who spent a whole year complaining about prices, quite rightly, and then, quite rightly, sold her house for £600,000?'

'Ummm,' we ventured, 'wasn't it – '

'No no, it wasn't. *Two*! Who was arrested for having impure thoughts?'

'Ah,' we said, 'that must have been . . .'

'Wrong again. *Three*! Who became the first princess from Swansea?'

'Oh drat it,' we said, 'that's obvious. Wasn't it that – ?'

'You're not doing very well,' said the Widow Twankey, 'are you? *Four*! Who was arrested for fiddling the national books? *Five*! Who was the Washington fringe benefit? *Six*! Who was the Mouth, and died in poverty? *Seven*! Who was her husband's mouthpiece, when he accepted his cards? *Eight*! Who was given her cards by a "male chauvinist" who said "Christian name, I want your job"? *Nine*!'

'Nine?' we said, dejectedly, 'When's this list going to end? It's not very impressive so far. It seems to have been a particularly bad year for your sex. All these old biddies being thrown out of jobs, and dying and whatnot.'

'*Nine*!' said the widow, 'Who was delighted to give up a job as the most important hostess in London? and *Ten*! who retired from her eponymous restaurant? That's 1976 alone. The rest of my questions are more general. You'll find the answers elsewhere in the paper. Now, take this custard pie, and this, and this!'

'Oh no we won't,' we said.

Women in Common

Which women did the followir men have in common?

1: H. G. Wells and Maxi Gorky

2: Nietzsche, Victor Tau and Rilke

3: Lucien Freud and Robe Lowell

4: Peter Scott and Kingsl Amis

5: Richard Harris and R Harrison

6: Lord Byron and Lo Melbourne

7: Peter Sellers and R Stewart

8: Nicky Hilton, Mike Toc Michael Wilding *et al.*

9: Kokoschka and Mah

10: Chopin, de Musset a Merimée

Redeeming Features

1: Whose face burnt topless towers of Ilium?

2: Whose nose, had it be an inch longer, might have p cluded a naval battle?

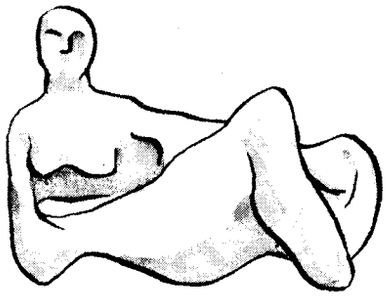
3: Whose breasts were s ported by a Howard Hug bra?

4: Whose toes got her i trouble with her mother?

5: Whose legs were insu for a million dollars?

Westminster Wives

Which surnames did the foll ing maidens take?



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1: Hellen Louise Guggenheimer
2: Beryl Laverick
3: Audrey Elizabeth Molton
4: Cecilia Doriel Sprot
5: Elizabeth Catherine Wrong
6: Edna May Edmunds
7: Susan Barnes
8: Margaret Hilda Roberts
9: Molly Loughran
10: Shirley Vivienne Teresa Brittain Catlin

Husbandry

To which famous women are or were the following married?
1: John Bayley
2: John Walter Cross
3: Clive Swift
4: The Reverend A. B. Nicholls
5: Jeremy Sandford
6: Baron Dudevant
7: Edmund Wilson
8: Henri Gauthier-Villars
9: John Middleton Murry
10: Ted Hughes

Heroine Addicts

1: Who said 'yes I said yes will Yes'?
2: Who said that she would hcweam and thcweam until she was thick?
3: Who dreamed last night hat she went back to Mander-ey?
4: Who vowed that tomor-ow she would get back her utler?
5: Who misbehaved in lorwich?
6: Who misbehaved in a carriage in Rouen?
7: Who was arrested at Stonehenge?
8: Who caught a fatal disease in the Colosseum?
9: Who did not take part in *Lovers' Vows*?
10: Who did not rescue her husband from drowning?

Birds of Avon

Which Shakespeare heroine, in which play, goes under the name:
1: Cesario?
2: Ganymede?
3: Fidele?
4: Doctor Balthasar?
5: Sebastian?
6: Aliena?
And in which Shakespeare play are the following unseen ladies mentioned?
7: Claribel
8: Barbary
9: Jane Nightwork
10: Marian Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot

Strange Deaths

1: Who died giving birth to the author of *Frankenstein?*
2: Who very much regretted a long scarf?
3: Who was done to a crisp in Rouen?
4: Who fell downstairs and perished in Cumnor Hall?
5: Who bailed out of a plane and drowned in the Thames estuary?
6: Who lost her head on BBC-2 this year?
7: Who was trampled to death in the 1913 Derby?
8: Who died either of poison or shock after a decisive defeat near Fenny Stratford?
9: Who died of an overdose of laudanum sometime after sitting for Millais in a bath in Gower Street?
10: Who died on the way to the Moabit prison in 1919?

Margarets

Which Margaret
1: might have been grieving over Goldengrove unleaving?
2: left lonely forever the kings of the sea?
3: was the Margaret of Lady Margaret Hall?
4: wrote of her consort Albert?
5: will never walk down Lime Street any more?
6: came to grief at Tewkesbury?
7: was known as the mother of Quakerism?
8: defended the Protestant cause with a bang?
9: gave them to the cottagers she met among the bushes?
10: is the daughter of a grocer?

Name-givers

What woman's name is
1: a meringue pudding?
2: a pudding and toast?
3: ice-cream and pears?
4: a queen and a cocktail?
5: a hairstyle and a wig?
6: a man's hat?
7: a girl's straw hat?
8: riots?
9: eye-wash?
10: nothing at all?

Mothers

1: Who was the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary?
2: Who was the mother of the Winter Queen?
3: Who was the mother of the King of Rome?
4: Who was 'Arrangement in Grey and Black Number One'?
5: Whose mother became her daughter-in-law?
6: Whose mother was slain by Beowulf?

Pretty as Pictures

Who painted
1: Olympia?
2: the naked Maja?
3: the Venus of Urbino?
4: the Jewish Bride?
5: the Countess of Howe?
6: the Rokeby Venus?
7: Vernon Lee?
8: Eleanora of Toledo?
9: Helene Fourment?
10: Celia?

Queens

Of which queens of England might it be said that
1: she married the brother of her former fiance?
2: she married her husband's brother?
3: she washed her hair in turpentine?
4: she had Queen's College Oxford founded in her honour?
5: they founded the Queens' College Cambridge?

Answers on page 937

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Malcolm Bradbury

Miniature Golf

The Bellamys were really very busy people, so that the only time they ever seemed to get together as a family was when they went abroad together, as they always did, for their summer holidays. He had a job, and she had a job; he worked in the county planning office, she in social work. He had a car, and she had a car; going on holiday, they always took his car, because it was bigger, and had a roofrack, and there were three of them, with quite a lot of luggage. What they did was to drive down to Southampton on the first day, and stay the night in a hotel, which Petra, in her efficient way, had booked months before; after all, everyone did the same thing in the summer. Then, after they had had breakfast, they would drive down to the docks, and join the long car queue, staring through the glass at all the other GB families, with their caravans or tents and their cars filled with petrol at the pumps on the docks, because in France it was, after all, more expensive.

This year the ship is a British one, and has the worn, overused air of having done too many of these cross-channel voyages too fast. Newspapers from previous trips litter all the passageways; the service at lunch is appalling, and for some reason, quite ridiculous on a voyage to France, the only red wine available is Argentinian; there are queues in all the public rooms, blocking passages, as people wait to change money, book return passages, buy duty-free cigarettes and perfume, rent tents. An air of irritability prevails, and it is quite a relief when the ship enters the harbour at Cherbourg and the passengers are called, through the loudspeakers, down to their cars.

The Bellamys go down to the car-deck, and get into the Maxi, looking through the glass at all the other families, waiting to start the ignition and get into France. The bows of the ship slowly rise. Joanna sits in the back, with her radio on, trying to get a French station, but there is much interference; Petra sits in the passenger seat, with the RAC route-finder she always remembers to send for on her knees, open at the street map of Cherbourg. The cars start moving off the ferry.

'Drive on the right,' says Petra. 'I was going to,' says John. They coast up to the passport barrier, where they are briefly checked; then they follow the line of British cars in convoy to the centre of town. Petra has a well-planned route, and when they are out of Cherbourg, and driving down the peninsula, she makes him turn off, to the right; it lets them drive down by the coast, and they lose most of the other British cars that way. Petra has her Michelin, and she has written to various Syndicats d'Initiative on the way; it is, as always with her, a very well-planned holiday. The sea splashes violently against the rocks near the road.

Petra talks to Joanna, who is uneasy about the holiday, being at the age when being with parents is as much an irritant as a pleasure. 'Why do we always do the same old things?' asks Joanna. 'Next year you can plan it,' says Petra. Listening to the faintly irritable chatter, John, excused by driving, wonders about holidays, and why we have them, and what we hope to learn. They repeat themselves; it is as if a conversation, dropped a year ago, is being exactly resumed.

They stop the night, as is planned, at Avranches, where they know a very good hotel, only marred by the number of British who stay there and try out their French on the staff, who speak English perfectly well. In the morning, they go on, round into Brittany, to Mont St Michel. They went to Mont St Michel last year, but it is a pity just to drive by it; as Petra says, it's one of those places that stimulate the imagination. They park the car off the causeway, in the official place, next to another British car. Joanna carries the camera, Petra the guidebook, open, and they walk in through the walls and up the steep little streets, between the tourist shops, one after another, filled with pottery and beach-toys and souvenirs. They do not, of course, buy anything. The crowds jostle; they climb up and up. At the top, they look down on the quicksands, glinting in the sun at low tide. Joanna sits on the wall, dangerously, one haunch over the edge; it is a long drop. 'Did you take a diarrhoea tablet?' asks Petra. Joanna says: 'I'm sick and tired of sights. Why do we always do the same things?'

Coming up the hill towards them are a party of spastic children, managed by two nuns. They struggle up over the cobbles, through the thick crowds, some with crutches, splashed out, their blown-out faces laughing. It is like some strange mortification. 'It's silly to bring them here,' says Petra. 'Have you finished?' asks Joanna. 'I'd like to go to a beach and swim.' 'I don't know,' says Petra, 'Why does one do it?' 'Do what?' asks Joanna. 'Come on holiday,' says Petra, 'If no one really enjoys it.' 'I'd enjoy it if you'd let me,' says Joanna. So they go back to the car, drive to Dinard, and find the beach. Joanna changes in the car, and runs into the water in her two-piece swimsuit, looking very white and thin. Afterwards they oil themselves and sun. Joanna lies tummy-down on the sand, and looks enviously toward a beach-club, where some teenagers are playing volleyball. 'I think we ought to stay here,' she says. 'I think we'd better get on,' says Petra. 'After all, we want to get down there before the Partridges.' The Partridges are old friends; they met them on holiday last year too.

John lies and stares along the beach at a French family, father, two teenage daughters, a younger son; they are playing *boule* on the sand. The father is fat, moustached, patriarchal, in bikini-style shorts that fit grotesquely just under the bottom curve of his belly. He is very authoritative, and gives orders to his children about how to play the game. There is a shout; someone has won; the father goes over to his older daughter, who has long dark hair. He slips his hand under the lower part of her bikini, along the haunch, and squeezes the buttock. The girl looks up at him and smiles. Petra's hand comes down on John's back; he twists his eyes to look at her. 'I think we ought to be getting on,' she says.

They have lunch in Dinard from a fixed price menu, which seems much more expensive this year; then Petra, looking at her maps and her book, says that they should drive southwards across the peninsula to the southern coast, where the sun will be warmer. They drive across to Vannes, and then to Guerande, and the salt-flats near the sea, and come to La Baule. It is a longer drive than John has remembered, and he feels irritated, handling the car a little clumsily, feeling outside the family conversation, which still has a note of resentment. Joanna wants boys, but she does not know how to get them; John remembers himself at this age, the sense of total solitude, and the desire for others. It is not hotter in La Baule. The wind is blowing hard, the tide is up, the waves high; a French couple trying to launch a catamaran keep being thrown back on to the shore again. Under the concrete wall, a party of nuns sits. Their habits are streaming and blowing like flags in the wind, and they laugh uproariously at the grotesque shapes they make.

'Aren't there good shops here?' asks Joanna, who has some money to spend. They go into the town, which is expensive, and they find a shop where Joanna is able to buy a cheap necklace she likes. Along the streets is a very good dress shop, to which Joanna draws attention. Petra looks, and checks it in her book. It is there, so she decides to go in. Joanna picks out a black dress that is slit down between the breasts. 'It's not your sort of dress,' she says. Petra immediately tries it on. She stands in the dress in the entrance to the fitting room. 'Dare I?' she asks. 'We are on holiday,' says John. 'I think I might,' says Petra, and looks at the price-tag; it is very expensive. 'You could get it for half that in England,' says Joanna. 'Oh, you couldn't get it in England,' says Petra. 'Go on, have it,' says John. 'We are on holiday.'

After the dress, they feel very conscious of money, being, as Petra says, the poor relations of Europe. So Petra checks the prices of hotels in the book, and finds them impossibly high; they decide to drive on to Pornichet, just along the coast. In the car, she looks through the books, and picks out an hotel, reasonable, well reputed. It is, when they get there, as she says: a pleasant place. They take the rooms, and John goes out to carry in the cases from the car. When he gets up to the room, Petra is standing there, in her pants, with the dress laid out on the bed. He looks at her from behind, at her bare shoulders, the part-bulge of her breast, the faint blueness of the little cave behind her knees, the flat line of her foot on the floor, the

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sag of her pants. She looks unformed, unshapen; he moves away from her, to the window. He thinks of the spastic children coming up the cobbled hill. Petra takes the dress off the bed and lays it in a careful ring on the floor. She steps inside the ring and draws the dress up her. She shapes it to herself at the bodice. 'Zip it up for me,' she says.

He goes across to her, from the window, and pulls up the zip; it catches her hair. She shakes her hair loose and goes to the mirror, examining the dress and herself. She pulls it about a little more, as if to give her body its distinctness. Her breasts jut. She is formed again. She says: 'Is it nice? Does it suit me?' John looks and says: 'I think so.' She turns and looks at him. 'You're not very interested,' she says. 'I do like it,' says John. 'I'll keep it on for dinner,' she says. In the dining room, a little later, they find Joanna already there. 'I think French fashions are behind the English ones,' she says when she sees the dress. 'You're both making me feel very good,' says Petra. They order the middle price menu, but it is rather a poor meal; the stew is coarse, and the wine a disappointment. Afterwards they walk down to look at the sea, but the wind is still high, and the sand stings their faces. They go back again to the hotel, and sit in the bar, drinking brandy.

'I'm quite tired,' says Petra after a while, 'I'm going up to bed, don't be long.' John and Joanna stay talking; she is unhappy, she feels unattended to. 'I can't wait to be grown up,' she says. They talk for a good while, and then they go up to their bedrooms. In the room, the tiny washbasin light has been left on for him. The dress lies neatly on a chair. Petra is in bed, asleep, lying with her mouth open, her face tired. Beside the bed is the guidebook. Of course she is tired; they are both very busy people. He gets into bed and she does not stir. He lies on his side, his face away from her.

In the morning they get in the car again and drive to St Nazaire, to take the ferry across the mouth of the Loire to Mindin. On the ferry, beside their car, is a truck and trailer, labelled 'Les Chiens Volants'. 'Ses singes, ses colombes, ses pouces,' says a bright poster. Once off the ferry, they find themselves in the last of Brittany, where it begins to turn into La Vendée. It is a region of small coast towns and fishing villages, economically fitted into the line of the landscape and seascape, which turn into simple resorts in the summer; the tourists come mostly from the French cities and the prices are really much lower. They come into piney country, and reach the small coastal town they are making for. They stayed here last year, and Petra has months ago, with her usual efficiency, booked pension arrangements for them. The proprietor recognises them, or affects to, when they arrive.

In the afternoon, after a slow pleasant lunch, they go down to the beach and lie there in the sun. Petra sits upright in her swimsuit, and talks to Joanna. John lies on his stomach and looks out toward the sea. This is an occupational coast, with a fishing port and a fish market. The sun has left red circles in his retina. Out on the sands, between the high and low water marks, stands a row of ramshackle wooden cabins, raised up on stilts which keep them above the level of the high tide. The stilts are covered in barnacles now the tide is out.

From the cabins, jutting out on all four sides, are long wooden poles with nets on. Petra has already looked them up in the book; they are called *pêcheries*. Something is happening; a group of men is walking out, their boots splashing in the wet sand and mud of the foreshore. They are carrying loaves of bread, bottles of wine, rugs, lanterns and nets. Three men go to one cabin, three to another, to stay there till the tide comes in and goes out again. 'I want to join the beach club,' says Joanna. 'Come on, I'll take you,' says Petra. 'Give me some money, I can do it myself,' says Joanna.

The next day the Partridges arrive. They have their own caravan, so they go to the campsite, in the pines. The Bellamys are on the beach again when they arrive; Dennis and Pat and the two young children. Joanna takes the children to the Club Mickey, which has climbing frames and organised games run by youthful disciplinarians. The children can be left; they all gather up their things, and go and sit at the tables on the pavement outside the hotel. They talk about foreign drinks: their flavours, their prices, their alcoholic content. They remember a restaurant they all went to last year, somewhere just along the coast. They decide to go there for dinner. Joanna and the children join them, and she has to be persuaded to babysit, but finally it is settled; it was what they had done last year. 'I'm a year older than last year,' says Joanna, 'I think you might take me.' 'It's an adult treat,' says Petra.

So, a little later, the children are put to bed in the caravan, and Joanna is left at the other end, under the lamp, with a paperback Kurt Vonnegut. Dennis has had the foresight to paint his headlights yellow, so they are going, the four of them, Petra and John, Dennis and Pat, in the Partridges' car.

The Café Breton is a seafood restaurant and is just as good as they remember it. They have an excellent meal, pleasant wine; it is not expensive. They drink their coffee, and then Dennis remembers something; they ought, as last year, to go and play miniature golf on the course that adjoins the restaurant. There is a hut, where you rent clubs and golfballs, and are given a scorecard. The course is lit by electric lights in shiny silver shades. The air is still warm, and you can see the lighthouse flashing in the dusk along the bay.

They split into pairs, Petra and Dennis, John and Pat. Each hole is a concrete track, with obstacles between the tee and the hole. The first one consists of a narrow house with a narrow doorway; the point is to get the ball through the house and into the hole on the other side. Petra plays first; but she is used to a larger kind of golf than this, though she doesn't, of course, have time to play much, and she hits the ball very much too hard. It overshoots both house and hole, and disappears into coarse grass. She laughs; 'Dans la nature,' shout two French boys, waiting to play. Dennis Partridge goes for the ball; Petra takes his and plays again. She manages better this time, and finally plays the hole in four. But Dennis beats her by doing it in three; it says on the scorecard that this is par.

They move on, and Pat Partridge and John play. Pat is a neat, well-made person; she does everything very precisely, and has none of that touch of angular clumsiness there is in Petra. She swings, the ball rolls down the track, rests neatly just through the house, waiting for her; she holes in two. John has much more trouble. His shots keep hitting against the house wall, so that the ball rebounds back to him again. The French boys, waiting, show impatience. Finally one of them comes over and shows John something on the scorecard. It is confusing; John can't translate; but Pat looks and explains. After three failed shots, you can take a penalty point and lift your ball to the far side of the obstacle. Even then, it takes him two more shots to hole the ball.

By the time they have done, the other two have already moved far on. New players have somehow come in between them. The course, with its wandering sequences and man-made hills, gives an artificial sense of distance. It is also crowded, so that it takes them a time to see, under the shiny lights broken by dark patches, where Petra and Dennis are. They are several holes on. Petra has taken off her woollen sweater, and hung it round her waist. She has brought the sweater for the evening chill; under it she is wearing the black dress. Her body looks angular and forceful, almost too powerful for what she is doing. Her hands are clenched on the club, her hair is blown. She hits the ball, somewhat clumsily; her breasts twist up as she moves. She appears to be laughing. Pat and John attend to their own game. 'I wish I was better,' he says, 'I'm holding you up.'

'It's so easy, though, look,' says Pat, and she swings. The ball moves exactly again, the movement being light; gently it moves down the course, through the obstacle, nearly to the hole. When she has done, John tries, but he is again clumsy and slow. And so it is all the way round the course. By the time the two of them have finished the 18 holes, it is completely dark. The others are not in sight. They hand in their clubs at the hut, and add up the scorecard. 'You've won,' says John, hardly bothering. 'I beat you,' says Pat, 'but what about them?' They walk back towards the restaurant. 'It's funny how involved you get in games,' says Pat, 'Even miniature ones.'

Inside the restaurant, they look for Petra and Dennis, but there is no sign of them. 'We'll wait in the bar and you can buy me a drink,' says Pat. 'I could look and see if the car's gone,' says John. 'Come on, buy me a Pernod,' says Pat. They go into the bar and sit by the window. In the clear, southern weather, you can see the paced bright flashes of the lighthouse; they illuminate the beach and the sea. The waiter comes, and John orders two Pernods. 'It's a very nice place,' says Pat, 'How did we find it?' 'Petra looked it up in her book,' says John. 'Petra's very good with her book,' says Pat. Out on the water there are flickering lights; they probably come from the wooden fishing towers. 'How do you get on

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these days, you two?' asks Pat. 'We're both very busy,' says John, 'We don't have a lot of time to notice.' 'That's nice,' says Pat, 'What do you think they're doing?'

'I expect they're doing what they did last year,' says John. 'What about you?' asks Pat, 'Do you want to do what you did last year?' 'Actually, I'd really prefer not, thank you,' says John. 'I see,' says Pat; there is a faint tint of red over each of her cheekbones. 'Petra says I suffer from withdrawal symptoms,' says John. The waiter comes with their drinks on a tray, and leaves the slips in a saucer on the table. They drink the drinks and, perhaps half an hour later, perhaps a little more, Petra and Dennis come into the restaurant. Petra wears her sweater over the black dress. 'We didn't think you'd have managed to finish yet,' says Dennis, 'It's not your game, is it?' 'We just went and looked at the lighthouse,' says Petra. 'What were your scores?' asks Pat. They compare scorecards and it emerges that Petra has won, by one stroke, 'I think the loser ought to buy the winner a drink,' says Dennis.

'Look, what about Joanna?' says Petra, 'I don't think we ought to leave her any longer.' So John pays the drink-slips, and they go out to the car. Dennis and Pat get in the front seats, and Petra and John in the back. There is a beachball between them. Nobody says very much. They park the car by the caravan, and Dennis goes and opens the caravan door. He stops in the entrance, and puts his finger on his lips. When they look, they see Joanna is asleep, over the Vonnegut, her head on the small table, her thumb in her mouth, under the lamp. She is hard to wake, and can hardly stand between them as they take her to Dennis's car. As soon as they get in, her head falls on to John's shoulder, and she is asleep again. 'I'll undress her and put her to bed,' says Petra, when they get back to the hotel. John and Dennis sit on the empty, unlit terrace for a minute, but there is no sign of service. 'It looks as though that's it for tonight,' says Dennis, 'I'd better get back. See you tomorrow. Nice to be together again.'

John watches the car drive off. The town gets very quiet in the evenings. He steps off the terrace and walks across the street. He takes the path down to the beach. The beach is very dark, and it is hard to see the lie of the sand, so he stumbles. But from time to time the lighthouse flashes, and he can see out to the glint of the sea, and the wet shine of sandbank. On the banks are visible the vague, misshapen forms of the fishing towers. Lights are flickering inside them. It is pleasant to imagine what is happening in those cabins. The men will be eating, drinking and fishing, lowering the big nets off the poles every so often, then drawing them up and pulling the catch into the cabin with their handnets. He starts to walk toward the cabins. He is into the sea. The moving water comes up to his knees, to his thighs. His suit fills with water. He turns and walks back on to the sand again, and then, in his wet suit, up the beach, back toward the hotel room where, he thinks, Petra will be lying in bed, on one elbow, looking things up in her book.

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Russell Davies

The Santa Letters

Ever since A. A. Milne's sensational revelation, in *Now We Are Six*, that King John (d.1216) once wrote to Father Christmas (ca.270 – ?) asking for a 'big red india-rubber ball', the literary world has been a-buzz with the rumour that the Christmas family has kept in its possession a comprehensive and constantly updated file of similar Yuletide requests: a vast collection of those Christmas letters that children of many nations and epochs and tastes have sent to 'Santa' at his home in North Powell, Beds. Now, at last, we are able not merely to confirm the truth that underlies the rumour, but to bring you exclusive extracts from a forthcoming collection of this fascinating and hitherto unseen material. *Failing That, A Train Set*, edited by Chaim de Reeminck, Offa White-Christmas and Albertine Disparue, will be published by Ostrich Books in the New Year. Thanks are due to the Literary Manager of the Christmas Estate, David Frost, and the many executors and agents by whose gracious permission our selection of these extraordinary juvenilia appears for the first time below.

Dear Father Christmas, You do not know me but my name is Horror Bell. I have two sisters. Their names are Terror Bell and Execra Bell. We make up stories. One of the stories is about a horrid old man with a beard who rides about the moors on a big sledge covered with sacks and drawn by several reindeer. His mad wife is in one of the sacks. The others are mostly full of old candle ends and bottles of reindeer liniment. In the end he plunges over a cliff on to the roof of a building, Spikesley Hall, which is on fire. The owner of the Hall, Mr Tadcaster, is also on fire. The horrid old man, falling down one of the many capacious chimneys of Spikesley Hall, is killed, but his mad wife spills from her sack and, by dint of pouring reindeer liniment over him, is able to extinguish Mr Tadcaster, who falls in love with her. The appalling nature of the incident drives her sane, and they are married and live out their days quite happily considering they have both conceived an unfortunate addiction to reindeer liniment. After he dies, she is banished to an asylum by her drunken profligate lover, Gilbert Dwarfsley, but we can't think of an end.

Just thought you'd like to know,
Love,
CHARLOTTE BRONTË

P.S. Can I have a trap-door for Christmas?

Dear Santa, I want a cricket bat, a cricket ball, some stumps and a razor. No, come to think of it, you can forget about the razor.

Yours in sport,
W. G. GRACE (age 14)

Honoured Santa, It is because our friendship, though distinguished upon my side, if I may so claim, by a certain constancy of imagination, and upon yours by that unfailing generosity in matters both material and aetherial which, while agreeable and attractive in the young, is so much more profoundly genial in one of your advanced, if still gaily advancing, years – it is because this friendship, surely the most disinterested of all the sundry partnerships of the spirit that have claimed that name, has never for one moment been sullied or imperilled by any hint of that debasing luxury, acquaintanceship – for indeed, my dear Father Christmas, I have never set eyes on you in my life, and would not be in the least surprised, or, be it said, dismayed, to learn that you, in coaxing your inestimable bulk (inestimable not in its defiance of the physicist's powers, I hasten to add, but in its incalculably uplifting moral role as the fleshly temple of your person), and a sack of, I dare say, commensurate volume, out of the bedroom chimney (an orifice not of the most generous span, and I offer you my apologies on that score) and across the floor of what I still regard (let this be a secret between us) as my nursery, have never thrown so much as a hasty glance in my direction either – that I feel emboldened to ask this Christmas, and be assured, sir, that I am far from unconscious, in so doing, of the intolerable strain to which you submit yourself annually in responding to numberless requests of this kind (such is the terrible algebra of my own life that I tremble and reel at the very thought of an existence so thunderously logarithmic as your own), if you will kindly, nay, compassionately, for my brother William is in a world of his own here, and not much company, supply, and in supplying, content me, I do assure you, with, perhaps, a little doggie? Failing that, a train set.

Yours affectionately,
HENRY JAMES

Dear Santa, This time when you come, don't just pull up the sleigh any old how on the roof of the garage, make it a slow glide in between the two chimneys, I want a bit of symmetry. Then wave *both* arms, do the 'Ho ho ho' – and I want a big round O that we can *see* – and for Chrissake fondle one of the reindeers, we must have something to show the Animal League. Got it? OK. I don't care what the hell you give me as long as it's a *performance*.

C. B. DE MILLE

Dear Father Christmas, What are
you bringing
Over the rooftops of Oxford winging?

Crackers for the mad, boaters for the Seine,
A drop of the hard stuff, a choo-choo train.

Zipping past Balliol, a shower of sparks
The porter's collie-dog, Prurient, barks

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Past coffee-bars and ancient tuckshops
Peeping through windows of red-lit brothels

'Look at Merton,' Santa hollers,
'Silent miles of toil-bent scholars.'

Statues awaken as on he races,
Peep from niches at his Day-Glo braces.

A startled owl stops dead in its tracks
And gets knocked cold by the flying sacks.

In the Ashmolean, never a word
But on to the roof slops a reindeer turd.

II

Dawn threatens. Is Santa done?
Down towards Reading he inclines
Towards the Third Division of the
Football League
Towards the feel of Lux-lene curtains,
the new settees
Set on the foam-back like reclining hippos.
All Berkshire waits for him:
In Suburb, settee of the plain,
Men long for socks.

III

Stockings of green, stockings obscene,
Stockings that smell and swell as well,
Abysmal stripe and ghastly tartan
Hairy calf-length, anklet spartan,
'Product of Italy', 'Made in Dumbarton',
Wrapped in a tissue, sealed in a carton,
'"Never without 'em," says E. Lustgarten'.
Hose enjoyable, hose unemployable,
Tights giving too much room for
the kneecaps
Tights kitted out with rude-looking pee-flaps
Tights for the winter, ballet and sex,
Tights where the spot is marked with an X,
Thick tights for journeyers, thicker
for hernias,
Knitted in nylon of every shade
The puce, the indigo, orange and jade,
The knotty, the spotty, the
been-to-the-menders,
The very hard-wearing from Marks and
Suspenders,
See-through, stay-fresh, tweed or twee,
The limp and the lumpy and the just-not-me.

IV

Millions are still abed
Dreaming of mollifying taxmen
Or a friendly feel behind the shelves in
stock-room or store-room:
Abed in working Reading, working in
well-read Oxford,
Reading in Welwyn Garden City,
They continue their snooze,
But shall wake soon and nudge
their neighbour
And none will play at postman's knock
Without a heartening of the quick.
For who can bear to feel himself
At Christmas?

Yours documentarily,
W. H. AUDEN (master)

P.S. I hope you agree with me that this is worth an extra bottle of Elizabeth Arden Crow's-Foot Creme this Xmas, you old stinge.

Caro Crimas, F U know watza good fa u u bringa me awat I ass fa dis time. Lass year I see no sine of da opra recudz. So where wazza da opra recudz? Johnny Torrio getza opra recudz. Big Jim Colosimo getza opera recudz. So why u gimme da model steama laundry? I own a hunerd pasent foola-siza steama laundry fa Cries sake! U punk Greenlandas, I dona understanda u, u brains all goes to u antlas an falls off in da summertime. WHY u maka me mad, WHY WHY? Now I gotta shoota somebodys. On u owna heads beat, is all I canna say, u marka my woids.

Uu abbraccio,
ALFONSO CAPONE

Lieber Santa Klaus, Für Weihnachten bitte ich Dich um ein Junior-Mozart-Outfit.

Vielen Dank,
LUDI V. BEETHOVEN (age 3)

Ad Sanctum Nicolaum Gloriosum Epistola

Right Reverend Father in God, you are not greatly respected by authorities on early ecclesiastical history. During your lifetime, your work as Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor was not much remarked upon. The reasons why you became the patron saint of boys are therefore obscure, and perhaps better left in that state, for in Eastern Europe and certain of the Mediterranean islands, you enjoy a reputation as the patron saint of seafaring men. This is an unwise conjunction of reputations, especially in these days when even the finest minds are habituated to nourish themselves on the gossip of patent rogues. I am bound to concede, nonetheless, that your festival runs a risk of duplicating the blessed St Martin's, itself no very convincing substitute for pagan seasonal ritual of the remoter past.

You are awful, but I like you. You are the fugleman, if I may say so, of a church militant in munificence, and thus of a civilised God. You continue to keep before this unchaste nation, despite the most footling efforts of Mr H. G. Wells and Mr Bernard Shaw, and the horny mass that cheers in their muddied wake, a spirit of elevation, uniqueness, innate superiority that finds perfect expression in the image of your yearly sleigh-borne flight across our murky heavens. In you indeed is exemplified that fusion of fictional form and abiding theological substance which is the prerequisite of all true 'enjoyment' of literature.

I hope you do not think I am trying to get round you, but I really would like a pop-up life of St Alphege for Christmas.

Shantih,
TOMMY S. ELIOT

P.S. Or a stick of Erasmus shaving soap.

Deare Father Christmasse, This Christmassetide, wee woulde lykke, iffe atte alle possyble, the Hearte and Stomache of a Kinge. The choyce of Kinge wee leave uppe to You.

Thankynge you inne aunticipatioune,
ELIZABETH R.

Dear Father Christmas,

312. I have addressed you. I have also addressed an envelope to you. Sooner or later, the one form of address will be fitted inside the other; and for the postman's purposes, the one form is subsumed under the other. But for mine?

313. Must remember to put a stamp on.

314. I hear someone say, 'Santa has a red coat'. Does any image of that rednes present itself to my mind during that fraction of time when the word 'red' has been spoken, and 'coat' is yet to be uttered? Suppose the person had been silenced in the very moment before the word 'coat' issued from his mouth. 'Santa has a red' is not yet a complete statement, if we discount for the present purposes the possibility of a political kidnapping. Yet does it not have the linguistic shape required to incite the mind to image-making?

315. Oh yes it does.

316. It is, of course, imaginable that reindeer can fly over rooftops. And yet such an imagining does not accord with our knowledge of the physical capacities of these beasts, working in teams under the control of a driver. What do you feed them on, you cunning old sod?

317. What an interesting old concept you are. Will you give me an inflatable ego for Christmas? You don't know what I'm talking about, do you? Why do I bother.

318. There's no answer to that.

319. Yours accurately,

320. L. WITTGENSTEIN

Dear Sir, I was born and brought up in one of those steep-sided, smoky little industrial zinc baths. Life was hard then, it smelled of carbolic and clanged when you kicked it. But we were happy, living out our double breasted days in the hobbledy house full of Olympic mice and gravy-boat-grabbing aunts, and we waited for Christmas, when I would help my mother knead and pummel and funnel and mince my father – oh, and her geological Welsh cakes, her marzipan, green as weeds, and marvellous, confusing, runny sausages. Mam, with her porcelain features, watering eyes and floury arms, sounded like a vase upside down, and looked worse, but to poor, drunken Uncle Ernie she was priest and comforter, bag and baggage, lock, stock and bottle opener. Every time he came into the room, Bass-breathed, beacon-nosed, his eyes like two ballbearings discovered in a pizza, she would stand up, and try to get him to do the same, but Ernie always declined, sometimes quite suddenly, and I would creep away and sit alone, outside in the giant, neighbour-needling hutch Dad had built, needlessly alas, to house the Roget's Thesaurus he had heard of me winning for a prize at school in Cwmclogdans Road.

Listen. Listen. Listen, you prodigal old toy-totaller, you whimsical bearded typhoon, I can go on all night like this. The thing is, do you ever call at the University of Texas? If so, will you kindly drop this off, see if they're interested, tell them there's plenty more, and bring me, say 95 per cent of any fee? Thanks. Also can you lend me three guineas till next Christmas? The doctor has told me the shadow on my lung is caused by an empty wallet. Oh the pain oh

Yours very truly,
DYLAN THOMAS

Deare Saynte Niccolas, HAPYE BOXYNGE DAY!

Ures,
ETHELREDE YE UNREADYE

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Yvonne Kapp

The Last Days of Engels

This extract from Vol. II of Yvonne Kapp's biography of Eleanor Marx, *The Crowded Years 1884-1898*, published by Lawrence & Wishart on 14 December, describes the anxieties of Eleanor, Marx's youngest daughter, over Engels's disposal of her father's letters and papers. In 1891, following the death of Helene Demuth ('Nymmy'), the Marx family servant who became Engels's housekeeper in her old age, he needed to find someone else to occupy this position. Of the three Marx daughters, Laura was married to Paul Lafargue and living in France, Jenny Longuet was dead and Eleanor was living with Edward Aveling as his common-law wife and busy with political work and lecturing. Engels, now aged 70, invited Louise, the young divorced wife of the German political theorist Karl Kautsky, to join him. Within three years Louise married Ludwig Freyberger, an ambitious expatriate Viennese doctor, who moved into Engels's house in Regent's Park Road. At this point Eleanor grew hostile and suspicious of the Freybergers' motives: 'Oh for a Balzac to paint the ménage,' she wrote. And again,

> I would not trust a fly to his [Freyberger's] mercies . . . He is an adventurer pure and simple . . . I confess I am also anxious on another matter – & that is all the papers. letters, MSS etc. are at the General's [the General was the common affectionate name for Engels] . . . shd anything happen to the General . . . F. is quite capable of getting hold of anything he can and selling it.

In the summer of 1894 Engels had a stroke while on holiday in Eastbourne with the Freybergers. In October the household moved from 122 to 41 Regent's Park Road, a much larger house where Freyberger put up his plate, three servants were employed and Louise gave birth to a daughter in November. Engels continued to express affection for both Freybergers and Marx girls, but Eleanor was beside herself, describing the situation as a 'horrible nightmare'. Engels – her 'second father' – was being alienated from her and thereby she might be alienated from Marx's precious heritage. Eleanor wrote to her sister Laura about the slow progress of Vol. IV of *Capital* and suggested that Laura herself should write and propose coming to England to collect manuscripts for copying. The younger sister's talk of 'at least' establishing 'some claim' roused Laura to write a fierce letter which Eleanor showed to Engels; and then, in Eleanor's words, 'the fat was in the fire'. Yvonne Kapp takes up the story:

On Saturday 22 December, Eleanor left for Salford where she gave three lectures. Before catching her train she called briefly at Regent's Park Road where she found everyone out and Engels left to 'shift for himself'. Aveling was to deliver Laura's 'fateful letter', as he called it, on the following day when, though Eleanor could not be there, he would attend the usual Sunday dinner.

It was Christmas Day when, in a style too fanciful to transcribe here, Aveling wrote 'To my well-beloved Laura and Paul . . . This despatch from the seat of war.' To put the matter simply: he had handed over Laura's letter to Engels who immediately agreed that Eleanor should copy out the manuscripts of Vol. IV. Engels then read aloud, in Freyberger's presence, Laura's question concerning the disposal of Marx's literary remains. To this he replied in

> a quiet, dignified statement that, *of course* Marx's M.S. & papers were held safe in charge for his daughters & could have no other destination. This was all clear and definite . . .

'But now,' the despatch went on in Avelingese, 'gather and surmise. Likewise perpend.' Aveling had taken his Sunday afternoon nap, during which interval the Freybergers had evidently had their say, for the lady was brought downstairs in tears. When Aveling awoke he was ordered by the General 'in his most military manner' to show him the letter again. 'Then the storm broke out': Engels said there was a conspiracy, there had been conspiracies ever since he had taken the new house; he knew all about it and who was in it; Laura had been 'put up' to writing this letter; the whole thing had been concocted when the Avelings and Lafargues had been together in France; Laura and Eleanor mistrusted him. Did they perhaps want a legal assignment?

> All this in the spluttering vein & under the workings of a yeasty conscience, and with much marching up & down and more or less effective dodging of furniture. I said it was no good bullying me. I was only a messenger and he must have it out with you two women . . .

Aveling reported everything to Eleanor on her return whereupon she wrote at once to Engels asking why he should take amiss a simple question about the fate of her father's papers unless he had a bad conscience. Had she thought he could so wildly misinterpret Laura's letter she would never have let him see it. She quoted to Laura what she had written to Engels:

> As to the general MSS of Mohr [i.e., Marx], you surely must know that Laura and I are sure *you* wd. deal with them as Mohr himself wd. have done. But you can surely understand that we shd not like the letters & papers (many of a purely personal nature) to fall into other hands than yours or ours . . . Edward says you seemed to believe in some deep-laid scheme. I can quite believe you do, for I shd be blind indeed if I had not seen the efforts to set you against us, & I can hardly wonder if you think what could never have occurred to you had our Nymmy been with you . . . It seems impossible you cd *really* believe Laura and I mistrust you. Whom on earth cd we trust but you? . . . After this (Xmas) is over I shall speak to you of it all, & I wish Laura cd be here to speak for herself. I shall say no more now, except that if you had not been very much poisoned against us you cd never have thought so meanly of Mohr's children as to think they cd mistrust *you*.
>
> There! C'est la guerre – but it *had* to come, & we'd better have it out. Of course what I shall say is that we do *not* trust the F.s – & I shall tell him *my* reasons: that Louise is asking me to sign & get you to sign a paper making *her* the responsible owner of the papers & that all we ask – surely no harm in that – is to know . . . what he has decided to do with the Nachlass. I shall then show him the whole Louise-Bebel-Lieb.-Singer correspondence and have *that* out too. In a word, my dear, it's war, & we've got to fight . . .

All this Eleanor wrote in haste before getting ready for the 'humbug' of 'a merry Xmas with our dear friends the F.s'.

It turned out to be a 'Bad Christmas Day', as Eleanor reported to her sister early in the New Year. But in the meantime Engels himself wrote to Laura.

> Last Sunday, Tussy being in Manchester sent me your letter to her about Vol. IV. I am quite willing and shall be glad to assist her if she will undertake the work of writing out the original MS.
>
> As to what you say about Mohr's papers and their treatment in case of my death, the matter is simple enough. All these things I hold *in trust for you*, that you know; and consequently on my death they revert to you. In the last will I made (when Sam Moore [a lawyer, Marx's translator and Engels's executor] was here last time but one) there is no special provision, but in the instructions to my executors accompanying it, there is a distinct direction to them, to hand over to Tussy, as the administrator of the will, the whole of Mohr's MS. that are in his own handwriting,

On 2 January Eleanor told Laura that she was really 'so sick of the sorry business' that she had put off sending 'the latest war bulletins'; but, since her sister must know how to answer Engels's letter:

> Here are the facts up to date. To begin at the beginning. On Xmas Day – as an appetiser for the festive meal – the General took me off to his 'droring room' & we proceeded to our first round. He had been very angry. he said, at my 'want of tact' in sending him your letter. Against the letter – as from you to me – he had nothing to say, but he thought my sending it to him was etc. etc. etc. Of course I did not tell him you had told me to send the letter. I simply pointed out that my sending it was the best proof that I did not think he wd be offended at it. After a certain amount of sparring – during wh. I told him he had not been angry until others had made him so, to wh. he replied indignantly 'No! I only was with Louise half an hour while Edward slept!' – we came to the point: the MSS. He said these were ours & wd, of course, come to us. I said if I had his assurance of that I was quite satisfied & knew you wd be. I added that I *had* been uneasy as I had no confidence in the F.'s & that perfect outsiders had spoken of knowing all about his intentions while we did not. This was the main result of the Xmas day round – but I declared we must have it out, & as this was what the General wished, he came up here to lunch on Friday last. Then we had our second – & so far as the General is concerned, our final round.

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. . . At present the upshot is that the General *will* (I hope!) take definite steps to make sure about the papers, & that he declares two such 'famose Frauenzimmer' [splendid females] as L. & I – tho' I am *not* so 'noble' as she is – must agree. Well, we – i.e. the noble one & I, will no doubt have a stormy interview – & then all will be peace – on the surface! I *wish* you cd come over soon. It wd be *very* good if you cd. . . . Thank Heaven the ghastly festivities are over . . . I wish you & Paul all good in this year. For myself I have one comfort. It *cant* be worse than the last one!

Love & kisses
Your
Tussy'

Laura's reply to Engels's letter must have been written in her most aggrieved manner. Despite his familiarity with the mode, Engels was 'startled' by it and wrote back on 19 January 1895:

> . . . I have tried, not very successfully, to recollect the terms used in my letter to you of Dec. 29th; still, in what I do remember there is not a word which ought to offend you. And indeed, if there is anything in the tone of that letter which you think strange, it is then entirely against my will and intention.
>
> It never could occur, nor has it ever occurred to me for a moment to doubt the right or the propriety. on your part, of inquiring at any time what steps I have taken or intended to take in order to secure the return, at the time of my death, to you, the rightful owners, of those papers of Mohr's which you have entrusted to me. Nor have I ever found anything to object to in the terms in which you spoke of that subject to Tussy. It seems, therefore, so exceedingly strange to me that I should have written to you in a tone that ought to give you reason to complain.
>
> I did indeed feel nettled at the *way* Tussy caused the question to be submitted to me, and, under the circumstances, thought I was bound to speak to her about it. When I did, I told her *not once but three or four times over*, that I had not a word to say against your letter, neither as to the subject-matter nor as to the terms used. Anyhow, Tussy and I had an explanation, which, as far as I know, settled everything connected with the subject and left us as good friends as before; and I should regret very much if, through any unguarded words of mine or through some other circumstances. that little incident had thrown its shadow as far as Le Perreux . . .

A few days earlier he had given his brother Hermann the 'pleasant news' that he had at last become an old man. If he looked younger than his years it was because, though with only 17 teeth left, there were no gaps in the front, but he had 'to accept Freyberger's word for it that I can't afford to get up to my old tricks any more'. His appetite for food and drink had dwindled; colds that in the past he had been able to shake off now lingered and turned into bronchitis: there was no getting away from it, 74 was a very different thing from 47, but at least his sense of humour had not deserted him.

In February Aveling wrote a card to Kautsky announcing that he was now 'responsible for the editing' of the *Clarion* and issuing the command: 'Kindly send me a few lines at once . . .' but, while having assumed this new responsibility, Aveling was not at all fit and, in March, he and Eleanor went to Hastings from where she wrote twice to Liebknecht [Wilhelm, the elder] to say that they were there 'for Edward's health, and even those few hours of fresh air – though it is bitterly cold, have done him good. Still, he is not very strong yet.' Her second letter was written on 14 March: 'Today it is twelve years since Mohr died – and I think I miss him and my mother and Jenny more to-day even than when we lost them.'

It was an unusually severe March. As a result of the hard frost 'London was thrown back to barbarism . . . four weeks without water . . . A fine mess it was . . .' wrote Engels but claimed that 'the cold weather suited me down to the ground, like a strong tonic, I felt 20 years younger while it lasted . . .'

Nonetheless, if Engels's death certificate – signed by Freyberger – is to be taken at its face value, then cancer of the oesophagus and larynx was diagnosed in the first fortnight of that March. There are no indications that he knew and many that he did not, for his correspondence then and thereafter was as cheerful, as full of political interest and as alert as ever . . . Only in a letter of 3 April did he betray a glimpse of waning concentration when he wrote to Lafargue: 'I intended to say a lot of other things . . . as well, but I cannot bring them to mind at the moment when I need them. I am gradually aging . . .'

The fact remains that on 26 March 1895 he drew up a codicil to his will. Witnessed by the cook and nurse employed in his house it made certain vital changes which meant that Eleanor inherited not only Marx's *family* letters but, except for those between Marx and Engels, *all* letters written by or to Marx. . .

Engels was still full of plans. For years, he told Kautsky, he had looked forward with enormous pleasure to writing Marx's biography for which he had assembled all the material covering the early years. Now, at his age, he must hasten to record the most important period, that of the First International, which none but he could do.

But by May it was a different story. He wrote to Richard Fischer on the 9th to say that, after a short bout of influenza, he was suffering from terrible head pains which he put down to rheumatism of the scalp. He could neither sleep nor work. He invited the Lafargues to come to England and to his great delight they agreed. He wrote to Laura on the 14th saying that the 'confounded pains' had driven him nearly mad 'and even now have not left me'. He felt

> extremely stupid and unfit for anything. The fact is this. Some time ago I got a swelling on the right side of the neck, which after some time resolved itself into a bunch of deep-seated glands . . . The pains arose from direct pressure of that lump on the nerve and will of course only give way when that pressure disappears . . . a couple of these glands are suppurating and will have to be cut . . . the time for the operation cannot be exactly fixed, but, it is hoped, will come off this week. That once performed, I am ordered to the seaside . . . Now as things are situated, would it not be the best thing for you to come over, say, in the course of next week, and then as soon as possible you and I could bundle off to Eastbourne . . . Louise . . . might come and join us for a week or so; after that Tussy and Edward might come . . .

In the meantime he had suffered one of the cruellest blows to his pride. Kautsky, Bernstein, [the German socialist and one of Engels's executors], Mehring, Lafargue and others were preparing a history of socialism and had not so much as informed him. Now Kautsky, on 6 May, sent him the first part, for which he was responsible, and said would it not be a splendid idea if the material Engels had in hand for writing Marx's life during the period of the First International were used as an introduction to the fourth volume, which was to deal with modern socialism in every country. Indeed, for anybody else to do this – though they had someone in view – would be an absurdity if Engels were willing. The only thing was it would have to be ready by the autumn of 1896, which was rather short notice, but no more than 20 or 30 pages were needed, and so on and so forth.

In a letter of dignified rebuke Engels replied:

> Of all those alive today – I think I may venture to say – there was only one whose collaboration appeared absolutely necessary, and that one was I. I dare go so far as to say that without my help a work of this nature today cannot be anything but incomplete and inadequate. And you know this as well as I do. Of all possibly useful people I am precisely the only one who was *not* invited to collaborate. You must have had very cogent reasons for excluding, precisely, me. I am not complaining about this, far from it. You had every right to do so. I merely state the fact.
>
> What did vex me, though only for a moment, was the peculiar secretiveness with which you shrouded the matter from me while the entire world was talking about it. I first learnt of the whole undertaking only through third parties, first of the general outline of the plan from the printed prospectus . . .
>
> Well and good. You have confronted me with a *fait accompli*. 'A History of Socialism' without my collaboration . . . But this is a situation of your own making which you cannot obliterate, cannot ignore, when the

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occasion suits you. And I can obliterate it just as little. If, after due consideration, you shut the entrance gates in my face at a time when my advice and help could have been of appreciable use to you, please don't ask me not to slink in through some little back door in order to get you out of an embarrassment. I must say that, were the roles reversed I should have meditated for a long, long time before coming to you with a request such as you now make. Is it really so difficult to realise that everyone must take upon themselves the consequences of their own actions? As you made your bed so you must lie on it. If there's no room for me in it, that's simply because you willed it so.

Well, that's over and done with. And now do me the favour of accepting my reply as irrevocable. Let this whole episode be dead and buried for us both . . .

He then went on at some length and quite typically to make constructive criticisms of Kautsky's part, giving freely of his knowledge and suggesting improvements . . .

The inescapable conclusion is that, while Engels was not aware of the terminal nature of his illness, everyone else was and that the information had been put about in such a way that it was thought to be not merely indiscreet but almost indecent to approach him on the subject of this long-term project for a history of socialism, to which self-evidently in other circumstances he must have been the chief consultant and guide. His friends were made to feel shame-faced and ill at ease in even mentioning it to him. Their plans were made behind his back and he was totally excluded. It was the most atrocious injury the grand old man could suffer. Whoever was responsible for inflicting it had done a vile thing.

Laura came to England without Paul and had been in Eastbourne with Engels for a while when both Eleanor and Aveling came at the end of June. They had vacated Gray's Inn Square and left London for good to live in Green Street Green, near Orpington in Kent from 1 July.

Louise, with husband and child, came only at the weekend and, on 1 July, Engels wrote asking her to bring a certain bottle of medicine and the newspaper cutting about Aveling's nomination as a parliamentary candidate by the ILP. For the rest, he was concerned that Louise and the baby should be warmly clothed on their next visit as the weather in Eastbourne had turned chilly. She arrived on 3 July and then stayed on, for Laura was to leave the next morning.

On the day after, he wrote to Eleanor at Green Street Green teasing her for having accepted the translation of Plekhanov's *Anarchism and Socialism*:

there indeed I do pity you. Where is the poor girl to have picked up the necessary knowledge for such work?

Here, everything as you were, as the military command says. I am much as usual, that is to say subject to all sorts of variations of temper and spirits. That will last for some time yet to come.

Either Louise or myself will keep you informed of how I go on.

Love you both . . .

He wrote to her once more, in a letter dated 9 July from 4 Royal Parade:

My dear Tussy,

. . . Edward's reply to Glasgow is allright. The solution is to be found *Labour Leader* 6 July page 2 K(eir) H(ardie) against E A in the *Jeunesse Socialiste*. Now the noble nature of K.H. shines out brilliantly. While E.A. attacks him, K.H. generously finds him a candidature, which if E.A. accepted, K.H. could on general grounds get cancelled by the Executive Council.

I was pretty fairly going on till Sunday night, since then had two bad nights and days, maybe partly from the acceleration, by the sea air, of the processus of elimination going on in my neck, but chiefly from the decreasing effects of the anaesthetics which I now have been using daily and in increasing quantities for about eight weeks. On the other hand I have found out several weak sides of my capricious appetite and take lait de poule with brandy, custard with stewed fruits, oysters up to nine a day etc.

Love to you both

F.E.

Sam Moore wrote to Eleanor on 21 July from 2 Stone Buildings, Lincoln's Inn:

My dear Tussy,

I felt very anxious to know how the General was getting on, so went down to Victoria to meet the 7.15 p.m. from Eastbourne this evening by which train Dr Freyberger generally returns.

I met him and I am sorry to say that his report is anything but cheering; he says that the disease has attained such a hold that, considering the General's age, his state is precarious. Apart from the diseased glands of the neck there is danger either from weakness of the heart or from pneumonia – and in either of these two cases the end would be sudden. He may go on for some weeks if pneumonia does not intervene, but if it does then it will be a question of a few hours. In spite of all, however, the General is quite hopeful and is certain that he will recover – he intends, and has arranged with the 2 doctors to return to London on Wednesday evening – so that if you want to see him you had better go to 41 R.P.R. on Thursday.

This is sad news and I trust the doctors may be mistaken. There is so much work to be done which the General alone is capable of doing, that his loss will be irreparable from a public point of view – to his friends it will be a calamity.

I have just time to write this – in haste –

Yours very sincerely,

S. Moore

Engels told Laura on 23 July that they were returning to London the next day.

There seems to be at last a crisis approaching in my potato field in my neck, so that the swelling may be opened and relief secured. At last! . . .

The elections here have come off as I said: a large Tory majority, the Liberals hopelessly beaten . . . The brag of the ILP and SDF face to face with a reality of some 82,000 votes for Labour candidates up to now (hardly any yet to come) and the loss of K. Hardie's seat. Still that was more than they had a right to expect . . .

I am not in strength to write long letters, so good-bye. Here's your good health in a bumper of egg-nog fortified by a dose of old brandy.

Cordial greetings to Paul,

Ever yours,

F. Engels.

This is the last letter he is known to have written.

Eleanor followed Moore's advice and went to see Engels that week. She had more than one reason, for, since writing to her, Moore had been much at Engels's bedside and had come to Green Street Green to tell her as gently as he could of Engels's revelation concerning Freddy Demuth's paternity [i.e., that Marx, not he, was responsible]. Shattered but disbelieving, Eleanor was determined to hear it from Engels's own lips. This she was not to do. When she arrived at Regent's Park Road Engels was beyond the power of speech.

This, their last meeting, was in more ways than one the unhappiest in all the long years. The beloved old friend from whom hostile forces had estranged her in the recent past, mute and near to death, was still able to write down the words that destroyed her faith in the consistent loving kindness of her father. Thus bitter gall was added to bitter grief and her sombre feelings as she travelled back to Kent can be imagined.

On 3 August Engels became unconscious and two days later at 10.15 in the evening he died, alone. The immediate cause, certified by Freyberger, was 'broncho-pneumonia for 1 day and 16 hours'. Louise wrote to Eleanor (in German) that she had 'gone out of the room to change for night-duty, was not away for 5 minutes and when I came back, all was over'.

Five days later at eleven o'clock on the morning of Saturday 10 August some 80 people assembled at Waterloo Station for his obsequies. Eleanor wrote to John Burns:

By his own express wish our dear General is to be cremated, & equally by his definite instruction the funeral is to be strictly private, only his personal friends being invited or such political representatives as were also his personal friends . . . we should be glad if you will attend . . . we shall be grateful if you wd mention time & place to *no one* . . .

Such ceremony as there was had to be postponed for three hours owing to a last-minute official intervention, the coroner not being satisfied until an informal inquest had been held while the mourners waited.

Short speeches were made by Gustav Schlechtendahl of Barmen on behalf of the German relatives among whom Hermann Engels, another nephew, was present, Sam Moore, Aveling, Liebknecht, Lafargue, Bebel, Anseele of Belgium and Van der Goes of Holland. Though speaking officially in the name of the French Workers' Party, Lafargue's voice was stifled with emotion as he said: 'Farewell, dear friend, I shall never again know so lovable, so good and so indulgent a friend . . .'

Apart from the members of Marx's family – the Avelings, Lafargues and Johnny Longuet – those who came included the Roshers, the Freybergers, Lessner, Stepniak, Mendelson, Vera Zasulich and Frederick Demuth.

Such secular valedictions took place in the small edifice at the head of the private single track of the London & South Western Railway from which hearse trains departed three times each day for Brookwood and thence on a spur line to the Woking Necropolis. Engels was cremated shortly after quarter past four that afternoon.

On a blustery morning, Tuesday, 27 August, Eleanor, Aveling, Lessner and Bernstein went to Eastbourne – 'the pleasantest seaside place' Engels had known – hired a small rowing boat and, 'six miles out to sea, almost straight from Beachy Head', consigned his ashes to the waves.

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

Philip French

On the Side of the Apes

Edgar Rice Burroughs: The Man Who Created Tarzan by IRWIN PORGES *New English Library* £19.50

A Christmas quiz question. Which creator of a legendary folk-hero was specially thanked by Q. D. Leavis in her *Fiction and the Reading Public* for his 'forbearance and generosity'? The answer is Edgar Rice Burroughs, who took very seriously the questionnaire she sent to best-selling authors to discover their ideas and methods. It did not unfortunately win him a place in the great tradition, and it is about as near as he ever got to the literary respect he craved in Britain, native land of John Clayton, Lord Greystoke, better known to successive generations of readers as Tarzan, King of the Apes. His desire for critical acclaim is odd when one considers that he hated serious literature, especially Shakespeare and Dickens, and disliked Kipling's stories, despite his obvious debt to them. But if Burroughs does not invite much critical respect as a stylist he deserves considerable attention as a phenomenon – the first author to turn himself into a limited company; a novelist with over fifty books in print in nearly as many languages a quarter of a century after his death; the man who dominates the TV screens this Christmas with a dozen Tarzan movies on BBC-1, not to mention the screening of an early *Flash Gordon* serial which his brand of romantic science fiction clearly inspired, and *King Kong*, which also arose from the vast appetite he created for lost tribes and prehistoric monsters. Burroughs took the already popular themes of Wells, Kipling and Haggard and made them over into vividly coloured verbal comic strips for the mass market.

Serious writers draw critical biographers, cult authors attract bizarre memorials – ranging from little plaques like *The James Bond Dossier* to William Baring-Gould's two volume monument, *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. There has already been a wild 'Definitive Biography of Lord Greystoke', *Tarzan Alive* by the SF writer Philip José Farmer, and now Irwin Porges has given us an allegedly definitive biography of Burroughs, a mammoth book of 800 double-columned pages, containing a text of some 400,000 words and scores of pictures, the most interesting of which are the book jackets and magazine covers, including a very early Tarzan one by N. C. Wyeth. Few people could want to know this much about the great man, and ultimately one can hardly see the creator of Tarzan for the jungle, while his alcoholic mate (for all that the photographs reveal her as a woman of considerable girth) is almost wholly obscured by the unpruned textual undergrowth and Mr Porges's customary circumspection.

Burroughs was born in Chicago in 1875, the son of a Civil War major, who ran a successful battery firm. His inability to settle to schoolwork denied him the Yale education enjoyed by his older brothers, and after several tough years at a middle-western military academy he served a stint as a trooper with the Seventh Cavalry pursuing renegade Indians in Arizona, prospected for gold, ran a store in the Rockies, punched cattle, did a bit of journalism, worked as a railway detective and finally finished up, married with three children, in a succession of boring office jobs back in Chicago. It was there in his late thirties that he turned to writing, choosing as an earnest of his sanity the preposterous pseudonym 'Normal Bean' for the magazine publication of *The Princess of Mars*, the first of his SF romances featuring that 'splendid specimen of manhood', John Carter. For the Tarzan stories that followed shortly afterwards he reverted to his own name, and in future employed pseudonyms only when submitting his more ambitious work (invariably without success) to the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *New Yorker* and other up-market publications to which he vainly aspired.

The pattern of his life – the rebellious childhood, the kicking around from job to job, the disappointments, the turning quite late to fiction for financial and emotional release – resembles that of other creators of legendary characters who established an existence independent of their authors, such as Bram Stoker, L. Frank Baum, Raymond Chandler, Ian Fleming. What seem in their work like the daydreams of youth were in fact the product of the bitter frustrations of middle age. And the fantasies that flowed from their normal beans matched those of their readers to perfection. What they provided was of course in the first place sheer romantic escapism from the humdrum world. But each offered something more than that, and in Burroughs' case we have in Tarzan a superbly contradictory package that reflected the unacknowledged conflict in Burroughs' life between his obsession with the preservation of the natural environment and his passionate attachment to one of its deadliest enemies, the automobile. By identifying with Tarzan you can simultaneously reject modern civilisation and triumph over barbarism, you can become one with the animal kingdom and feel your human superiority over it, you can reject the human race and exult in being the finest Aryan around, you can swing freely from tree to tree in a leopard skin and still be respected as a king.

From 1915 up to his death in 1950, Burroughs was condemned to write endless sequels to the Tarzan and Martian books, the public being but little interested in the Westerns, social-conscience fiction and crime stories he also turned out during the steady six hours a day, six days a week, writing schedule that he kept up for most of his life. 'Were I literary and affected with temperament I should have a devil of a time writing stories', he once said. But he wasn't, and had no trouble producing what he self-deprecatingly called 'my brand of litratchoor' even with a child sitting on his knee.

Like those other middle-western dreamers of profitably collective dreams, Baum of 'Oz' and Walt Disney, Burroughs inevitably settled in the state of dreams, California, where he created the Los Angeles suburb of Tarzana and became a prominent figure in the movie colony, and indeed a sizeable industry in himself. Business always took first place in his thoughts – villains for instance were usually chosen from countries which bought the smallest numbers of his books. This fortunately chimed with his right-wing politics (which, *pace* many of his critics, stopped short of fascism) and selective xenophobia. In the Great War Tarzan and Co were slaying barbarous Huns by the dozens, which was to cost Burroughs dear when his colossal post-war sales in Germany ceased overnight with the revelations about his anti-German texts; in the inter-war years, Stalin's agents were attempting to assassinate Tarzan while in his science fiction Burroughs assailed native radicals; in World War II Tarzan and a dirty dozen allied patriots were despatching hordes of sub-human Japs in the Pacific. Yet from all accounts he was a likeable, kindly, amusing man and there is something touchingly uncalculating about the workings of his imagination. Moreover, his interest in his readers, with a number of whom he corresponded over several decades, was genuine.

Until his second marriage at the age of 59, when he honeymooned on a Hawaiian cruise, Burroughs never apparently left America. He travelled great distances by car across the United States, and much greater ones in his mind through outer space and his own version of our planet's wilder places. From what recesses of his brain the flood of bizarre ideas came, no one knows; he always denied they came from his nocturnal dreams, though throughout his life he was tormented by nightmares from which he would regularly wake screaming with such terror that his second wife couldn't bear sleeping in the same room. Nothing in his diurnal round was as colourful as his daydreams, and he proved incapable of rendering everyday happenings, or even the occasional excitements of his life, with any degree of vividness or without resorting to facetiousness. In 1940 he moved to Hawaii for peace and economy, and ironically found himself with a grandstand view from the other side of the bay when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour, a lively sight that he watched for some while 'thrilled by the realistic manoeuvres the navy was staging'. He had warned about the inevitable treachery of the Japanese (and was later to propose their total deportation from Hawaii), but now that it had come, the event seemed less dramatic, less an affair of cosmic significance, less truly real than one of his tribal wars on Mars.

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George Melly

All What Jazz?

All You Need is Love: The Story of Popular Music by TONY PALMER *Weidenfeld* £6.50
Electric Children: Roots and Branches of Modern Folk Rock by JACQUES VASSAL translated by Paul Barnet *Muller/Taplinger* £6.95

Tony Palmer has always displayed enviable energy but here he has surpassed himself. Engaged to make what turned out to be 17 documentary programmes on the history of popular music, he roamed the world filming and interviewing hundreds of artists, critics and impresarios. He also commissioned essays on every aspects of his subject and finally, in addition to the films themselves, he wrote this book. Is it a spin-off? Not according to Palmer. In an interview in *Melody Maker* he claims that it was his first ambition to write the book, but realising no one would pay him to research it, he persuaded EMI and Polygram to back the films; a strategy that may not please Sir Bernard Delfont and Tony van de Haar if it is entirely true.

My own feeling is that films and book were probably of equal importance to Palmer, the kind of multi-media venture which would appeal to a man with his appetite for work. Perhaps they should be judged together too, but the book does after all exist on its own and can be read by people who won't necessarily see the TV series. How does it stand up?

As an example of book production, admirably. With its clear print and splendid photographs it is by present standards a snip. As a history of popular music, despite its many virtues which I shall discuss in a moment, it is less convincing. No one but Palmer could have carried through such an ambitious project with such panache and sweep, but his very drive, his determination to act the iconoclast in the established temples of criticism, has led him into many curiously naïve heresies. In effect his failings are tied to his virtues. His book is exciting and excitable. Its urgency gives it an air of life refreshingly free from a more academic approach, but it suffers in consequence, at any rate in its earlier chapters, from a breathtaking number of errors both in general and in detail.

Let us look for a moment at the chapter on jazz, the area where Palmer believes he has made his most important discoveries. His main error is to set up a simplified history of the music; the kind of congo-drums-Storyville - up - the - river - now - you - has - jazz myth, and then to demolish it. What he seems to be unaware of is that jazz research exploded this particular collection of factoids long ago, and this applies also to what he seems to believe is informed opinion as to the origins of the music. Only a very few serious jazz enthusiasts still think of New Orleans as the womb of jazz, even though few would contest its right to be considered its principal cradle. The point about early jazz history is that some areas in its development may never be cleared up now, and that the few old men still living have faulty memories and the wish to please. Tony Palmer's 'revolutionary' theory of jazz history either reiterates views long established if he had sought them out, or wastes our time by dismantling the romantic simplifications of 30 years ago.

Yet more serious than this shying at already well-battered Aunt Sallies, is that in the jazz chapter at any rate there are a phenomenal number of factual mistakes. I can claim no credit for spotting this myself. I am no jazz historian, but in the bandwagon John Chilton, leader of the Feetwarmers and one of the world's leading archivists in this field, picked up the book and within a moment had spotted three errors: Billie Holiday didn't go to prison for drug offences until 1947; Palmer claims she had been sent inside again for them in World War II. Bix Beiderbecke was christened 'Bix' and not 'Bismark'. Louis Armstrong was in England in 1932 and not, as reported here, 1931. Of course these are small points, but further scrutiny by Chilton has revealed a surprising collection of mistakes. It tends to sap confidence in the rest of the book, and this is a pity because his general approach to popular music is sound and original and I imagine that in the later chapters the information, in our excessively documented times, is less likely to be faulted.

The book, rightly in my view, discards chronology in favour of following each form of the music through from its origins to either its absorption into another form, or its state in the present. As I wrote earlier, Palmer originally commissioned essays on each theme to act as 'film scripts' for his researches. It might be imagined that all he has done is to revamp his information, but as one of the contributors I can claim that this isn't so. Some of my ideas and instances are there certainly in the blues chapter, but I would in no way accuse him of plagiarism. He has talked to surviving blues singers, ranged America in pursuit of evidence and speculates very intelligently, if tendentiously, on his findings.

What links each chapter in the book is the way that popular music is always threatened by its own success, that the originators are seldom those who win the glittering prizes, and that more often than not the men who recognise the commercial potentialities of a form fatten it only for the slaughter. Whether it is the songs of the music hall, or the decline of Hillbilly authenticity into the sentimental glitter of Country and Western, he traces the hows and whys, the pressures and the temptations.

Towards the end Palmer becomes almost apocalyptic. Seeing in the generally original concepts of early rock its decadent decline and mourning for those who destroyed themselves out of despair or the fear of dispossession, he states, without overemphasis, the flawed enigma of popular music. The way it has spread defuses it, making the loss of roots among its successful practitioners inevitable. I look forward to the films with keen interest and anticipation. Meanwhile this book, for all its bluster and failings, has the virtue of laying the ground, and the choice of illustrations is impeccable.

Electric Children echoes Palmer in its emphasis on the difficulties of fighting off commercialism. Written by a young Frenchman, it is hindered by its political rigidity, its belief that radical protest is *always* admirable and right. In consequence, if anyone mellows they lose marks. If, in retrospect, the object of protest is seen to be unworthy or fake, the fact is ignored. Much of the early material is well-researched and fascinating – the chapter on Woodie Guthrie for example – while the analysis of Dylan is especially interesting because here the author's aesthetic respect for most of the work sets off a fruitful and equivocal

Craig Raine

A Cemetery in Co. Durham

The stones line up in corrugated rows
like a game of *Dover Patrol*
and the ground is full of pencil boxes.

But YOUNG CHILDREN ARE NOT ALLOWED
WITHOUT SUPERVISION because
this is where the adults play.
They to and fro to a chirping tap
and fill the rusty watering can.
The urns are pretend poppy pods . . .

Untidy as a nursery floor, with toys
and little furniture, it is a good place
to come and talk like a child to yourself –
no one is listening.

Ivy clambers over the sides of a rusty cot.
There are snails and scabs of lichen –
things to pick at while you read.
& CHILDREN-IN-ARMS ARE NOT ADMITTED
TO FUNERALS

unless a father pays the bill
for a satin box of buried treasure –
the feel of a fontanelle, buttocks
tender as a soft-boiled egg, and all
the inventory of little flesh.

Each gothic window is like an ironing board
Mothers touch the pointed stones
as if they were irons.
They never lose their heat –
always burnies, always burnies . . .

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confusion in his mind as to Dylan's withdrawal from political commitment into private fantasy. Too often though response is over controlled by theory and the translator, Paul Barnett, who himself contributed some of the later passages, is defeated by that frequent inability of those faced with a French text, the task of turning it into real English. 'Mary, with the voice of an enchantress, alternates dramatic tension with mischievousness!' Eh bien!

Alan Brownjohn

Stand Up

Poetry Dimension Annual 4 edited by DANNIE ABSE *Robson* £3.95 and £1.75
New Poems 1976-77: A PEN Anthology edited by HOWARD SERGEANT *Hutchinson* £3.50
New Poetry 2 edited by PATRICIA BEER and KEVIN CROSSLEY-HOLLAND *Arts Council of Great Britain* £3.80 £2.00

Without editorial trend-spotting or moralising, Dannie Abse puts together a personal estimation of the best poems and articles from slim volumes and magazines appearing during the year. For the PEN *New Poems,* too, the method now is to send one editor to already-published work; Howard Sergeant has taken two-thirds of his choice from periodicals, and arranges his poems thematically but without drawing conclusions. Only the Arts Council continues (as it honourably must) to call down the avalanche of the unpublished by proclaiming its anthology in advertisements, and waiting for the poems to submerge Piccadilly: this year, nearly 10,000, and no less than 155 poets finally appear in strictly alphabetical parade in the Beer-Crossley-Holland selection. Three compendious, scrupulously fair, self-effacing collections, then; and what message comes over about English Poetry Now?

It's alive, obviously; and moderately well; and living in a domain where craft and care are valued more than daring or experiment. The Abse *Annual* dispenses with biographical data, but the other two books include those small-print paras of personal information which tell so much about how the poets want to be seen (and provide fascinating postcripts to the poems themselves). The poets are famous, and bristling with solidly-based honours; or are coping nobly with grisly jobs and families; or are opting out; or are even quietly untraceable. Of two Arts Council poets – not bad ones at that – it's stated that 'he omitted to supply his address . . .' Poetry has become, it would seem, much more widespread, more quotidian, and more democratic in these 20-odd years since the first PEN anthology was published. This is fine, but it would be nice if some of the peaks showed a bit more prominently: I'd advise careful readers working calmly through many pages of ordinarily praiseworthy verse to note, for example, that almost *hidden* in *New Poems* and *New Poetry* is work of unquestionable excitement and distinction by, among others, Ted Hughes, Jon Stallworthy, Michael Longley and Peter Redgrove; and promising things from comparative newcomers like John Cassidy, Philip Pacey and George Tardios. And Frank Ormsby begins to seem one of the best young poets not yet to have come up with a volume of his own: 'Spot the Ball', about failing to win one of those easy-looking sports page competitions, is one of the most engaging (and haunting) poems in *Poetry Dimension Annual 4*:

> Four years now and never on the
> right end
> Of a Snowball. Thursday's edition tells
> Of prizes bound for places elsewhere.
> The 'Belfast man who requests
> no publicity'
> Is always another.
>
> We persevere from habit. When we try
> These days our hope's mechanical,
> we trust
> To accident. We are selective
> No longer, the full hundred crosses
> Filling the sky.

Poetry Dimension is an 'annual' by name, and mightn't there be dividends in a slightly less austere and neutral procedure? A more inclusive and festive air, some reportage, some photographs? (How adroit Bloomsbury and the Thirties were at reaching out to posterity via these posed groups of celebrities spread in front of someone's camera!) What we do get, at least, is some substantial prose contributions; and on the principle that an anthology of this kind should preserve interesting items that might otherwise have vanished, it's excellent to have some of the magazine pieces Abse reprints. There is Ian Hamilton's NS summation of Stevie Smith, at once defusing a myth and solidifying a reputation; or Theodore Weiss reminding us that Philip Larkin *does* go to disconcerting extremes in championing Betjeman as a mentor for the English (the PEN and the Arts Council offer no eager disciples); or Charles Osborne recounting the tragi-comic confusions of 'The Day of the Funeral' (Auden's, in Kirchstetten; and it's interesting that no one in these volumes has written as movingly about Auden in verse).

What we don't get, from any of these compilations, is the sense that English poetry *is* currently a bit of a battleground, the scene of tart, iconoclastic reviews, frenetic press correspondence, paranoid manifestoes and solemn campaigns. Weird contests now take place between a slightly sluggish mainstream and some crusading modernists, but the noise seems very distant in these pages (though Brian Patten does invoke Rimbaud and Blake against Donald Davie); and the shrapnel falls only as a spray of trendy ampersands. This kind of anthology can't, by its nature, take up an embattled stance. But some record, somewhere, of the odd in-fighting going on in so many places might reveal quite a lot to posterity of what was genuinely engaging and troubling poets and their readers in 1975/76.

Xmas Treats

Burgundy: Vines and Wines
John Arlott and Christopher Fielden
Illustrated Colour and Black & White £10.00
'A well-rounded book, full of body and bouquet.' *Signature*

This Nutrition Business
John Yudkin £4.50
'A guide to good eating.' *Daily Telegraph*

The Natural Garden
Roger Grounds £3.95
'A book to treasure and follow in every respect.' *Home and Country*

The Man in the Street
David Marshall £3.75
A brilliant Runyonesque account of a dustman's life, as featured on television.

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Frederic Raphael

Aphrodite Ascendant

The Goddess of Love by GEOFFREY GRIGSON *Constable* £6.50
Love Letters: An Anthology edited by Antonia Fraser *Weidenfeld* £4.95

War is too serious a business, so the meddler's warrant runs, to be left to the generals; are the Classics sometimes too delicious to be left to the scholars? Geoffrey Grigson assures us, in the introduction to his fragrant *pot pourri* on the subject of Aphrodite (and her Venus version) that he makes no claims to scholarship: his book is a bouquet, gathered on an informed ramble, rather than the exegetic trudge of the routine academic. I was soon won to his side by the discovery that he shared my closet opinion of Maurice Bowra, who for so long made a dusty corner of Greek poetry. Oh the tedium of Bowra on almost anything! Tedium used, of course, to be the gauge of seriousness in the Classics. To belong, as I did, to the last generation of sixth-formers to whom Classical studies were more or less obligatory was, I daresay, rather like being an unquestioning Pagan before Constantine crossed himself at the Milvian bridge. What other culture was there, what other obstacle course worthy of our brains? The odd thing was, we never considered Latin and Greek to be languages *comme les autres*: fluency was neither our purpose nor, if I was any evidence, our achievement. Why did we never share the confidence of the despised Modern Linguist that one could truly inhabit a foreign tongue? Grigson helps one to see: the systematic repression of the sexual ingredient ensured that we learned a neutered vocabulary, a language in which no one had ever been at home.

The Christian Fathers, of whom our pedagogues were the pusillanimous descendants, built their systems on the theology of the Greeks, but (like Plato) they took a shocked view of the Gods. The Immortals, and their temples, were sentenced to death, after being abused with all the gaudy invective with which new tyrants anathematise the old. Genial Aphrodite, Sin Herself in Christian eyes, was particularly purged, save when she underwent recension into the Blessed Virgin and became, for instance, Our Lady of the Pomegranate. Marble, luckily, proved fairly resistant to doctrinaire destruction. Aphrodites are still being resurrected from rubbish dump and sea-bed and the splendid illustrations here testify to an already seductive haul.

Where did the Greeks get their Gods? Enoch Powell, the Hellenist, must have been unnerved to discover that most of them were immigrants. Aphrodite began as Astarte or Ashtoreth, before she changed her name, as newcomers will when they prove unpronounceable in a new country. She island-hopped from Asia Minor before being installed on the mainland as the most improper of proper Olympians. Her new name was promptly graced with a plausible naturalising etymology: she was said to have sprung from the severed genitals of Kronos, when they were flung seething into the sea after a divine family quarrel, *Aphros* meaning foam. (A modern Greek poet, Panselinos, refers to diplomats, caustically, as *aphrokrema* – a cross between scum and cream.) Aphrodite seems to have given rise to a host of Freudian puns: she was both Philommedes, Lover of Genitals – boys' say Liddell and Scott – and also Philommeides, Lover of Laughter. Love is also naturally two-faced: hence Peitho, Persuasion, the Goddess's familiar, who is invoked not only (*pace* Grigson) when seduction is in view but also to render treachery undetectable, for instance when Orestes wished to gull Klytemnestra, before killing her and Aegisthus. All's fair in love and war; the two are very close sometimes, as the Ares affair and Aphrodite's warlike vestiges (she was colonel-in-chief to the Spartans) serve to indicate. Is not Cyprus, her island, the bloodiest in the Mediterranean?

Aphrodite, sea-fruit of semen, was also the Goddess of seamen, who had one of her in or near most ports. But if she was extremely popular, her observance being much honoured in the breach, she was not a lady for formal occasions. The Greeks loved Love, but they put their faith in chastity, in Artemis and Athene, originally a Mycenaean protectress of citadels. Polytheism was perhaps the consequence of an uncertainty about what really mattered, civic virtues or personal pleasures. The inventors of logic could never quite make up their minds. Even the sex of Aprodite – the projection, as Grigson emphasises, of her worshippers' desires – had a shadowy male counterpart, Aphroditos. And might not a Rorschach-inspired glance at the 'Venus of Lespugne' (about 2,500 B.C.), grandmother of love goddesses, read the huge buttocks, for a disconcerting andromorphic moment, as testicles and the faceless bulb of a head as a rearing *glans penis*?

Eroticism, Malraux pointed out, is a way of escaping from one's era: it is out of this world. Aphrodite's army was great (almost all Greeks being her privates), but her public life was not a success. She was unimpressive in Cabinet and her attempt to play Minister of Defence for the Trojans was so inept that she actually succeeded in being wounded by a mortal, whereupon she fainted at the sight of *ichor*. Not until she became Venus, and ancestor of the stolid Romans, did she acquire the statelines of a proper tutelary Goddess. Aphrodite got her own back, however: according to Pliny, the Romans ruined themselves by spending all their gold on Asian fripperies for their imperious imperial women. Like all immigrants, she sent money home when she could. (More Roman coins have been found in India than anywhere else). She is not dead yet, of course. Grigson finds her alive and well in the work of Beardsley, Modigliani and Matisse, though he does not include her likeliest modern sister, the *Playboy* gatefold girl.

Grigson is not exhaustive; he should be read as paeon rather than source-book. He never mentions Nerites, for instance, with whom the Goddess lived under the sea and who, according to some, was changed by her into a cockle when he would not try terrestrial sex. On this view, his metamorphosis furnished the surfboard on which Botticelli was to bring her in to land. I became impatient with Grigson only when, after proving with a few deft lines that he might be the ideal translator for the *De Rerum Natura*, he wrote flippantly and without much insight about Lucretius. I was merely gleeful when I found that he did not seem to know why ravens, as well as doves, were sacred to his Goddess; it was because ravens were said to copulate (and give birth) through the mouth, thus licensing another ploy in the lover's game. No quibbles, however, should conceal that this is a handsome book, both to look at and to read. I loved it.

Anthos, Grigson reminds us, the Greek for flower, was also bawdy for the female sexual parts. (What wasn't, one begins to wonder?) Nice then that Antonia Fraser's anthology is of love letters. A mixed post-bag, mostly from and to toppish people, Cromwell, Napoleon, Sir Thomas More, etc. There are, in my view, too many letters from professional writers; I preferred the fervour and naturalness of the soldier in the trenches, the touching courage of Camille Desmoulins in the condemned cell. The French (in translation) come off best; though England's champion, Byron, is poorly represented by a letter to Lady Caroline Lamb, whom I do not think he ever did more than fancy. However, the collation, if scrappy, is as pretty as an *hors d'oeuvres* tray arranged by a skilled hostess and there is fun to be had in trying to infer from the style of the letters how the affair worked out. The index summarises subsequent events. Freudians will enjoy chasing Vanessa Vanhomrigh 'under Jonathan Swift'; feminists will be glad to know that Sir William Temple is to be found 'under Dorothy Osborne'. No missionary assumptions here: Aphrodite lives.

Molly Holden

Fox in the Garden

He was certainly not there
of intent, his fur licked black
by rain, casting about
the fenced corners of new gardens
in the grey Sunday dawn,
lifting his muzzle to scent
his old track then leaping away
on its line to liberty
in shrinking woods.
Memory
misled him once, has never
done so since. His red and cautious
arrogance has not been seen
again on these dull lawns.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Ian Hamilton

Christmas Box

I've been trying to think which, of all the many Christmases I've hated, was the one I hated most. It isn't easy. For a start, most of my really ugly memories of the event date back to early childhood; those grown ups really meant it when they said that Christmas was for *me*, and for other similarly jumpy diminutives throughout the world. Since it was for *me*, the clear suggestion ran, I'd better make sure I didn't mess it up for *them*. Carrying the burden of the oldies' Christmas bliss starts a lot earlier than people think. In my experience, the main business of the day has always been to keep some ancient face alight. As far back as I can remember they'd be there watching you, lynx-eyed, as you picked around amongst your gifts; were you surprised enough, did you unwrap it at the correct speed, did your face properly go blank when some unpopular aunt's measly offering was unveiled, which toy were you going to spend most of your time playing with, and so on? One wrong move and the whole day would be 'ruined'. I can think of at least four pre-adolescent Yules that were 'ruined' before we were even within saluting distance of the Queen's Speech.

That speech. In my household, we had to stand to attention when the Anthem was played, and there are innumerable ways of not *really* standing to attention; a lot of the actual speech would get drowned by my father's minutely detailed analysis of his three sons' lack of military bearing. Little wonder that by our teens it would have been hard to find anywhere three more hideously stooped and concave striplings. How did you get to look like *that*? gym masters would exclaim. And we'd just shrug (or do our best to shrug) and say, 'That's Christmas', or, if we were feeling tough, 'Ask Him'. The Queen's Speech, though, was the fulcrum of the day; if you could get through to it without disruptive incident, you were pretty well home and dry. Food eaten, the grown-ups would relax their vigilance, get slothfully testy and with a bit of luck throw you out into the street 'to play'. Three hours later they'd be rested, slightly bovine, and ready for a relaxed evening discussing why your top present was in smithereens.

Yes, the fond memories come crowding in, and I really wouldn't want to have to pick the worst. But those tense, melancholy festivals I'm thinking of were all, of course, pre-telly; there were gaps between the meals and any one of them could be the explosive one that failed. Nowadays all a kid needs to plan his Christmas is an up-to-date copy of the *TV Times*. Since the Christmas line-ups were announced I've met three nine-year-olds who can tell you exactly where during the course of the day they intend to break off from the box and take a quick look at all the nice things Santa's brought them: most of which were ordered weeks before on the strength of Saturday morning toy commercials. If they are up early enough (unlikely, since these three at least are thinking of having a 'decent lie-in'), there's a handy unwrapping slot at 8.45 on the big day: both channels are staging carol services. But they'll have to be fairly nifty; cartoons begin at 9.30 through till after 10.

The sophisticated infant is therefore tending, I am told, to opt for 10.10 as the starting point. This is by far the clearest stretch of the day, with Angela Rippon appealing for Television for the Deaf, and then hour-long morning services on both

ITV and BBC-1. BBC-2, which isn't really trying this year, doesn't open up till after noon. It is hoped that this free hour will be sufficient to dispose of the entire gift-and-parent-situation: unwrapping, gratitude, cursory play with each item received, two or three breakages, and so on. The fact is that if all this isn't taken care of by 11 a.m., when the box starts up in earnest, there are really only two other 'play-slots' available throughout the day – the Queen's Speech, of course, at three and the six o' clock news. That's only a total of 20 minutes – not an awful lot you can do with that but handy to have in reserve. Handy also for unusually parent-attached mites; provided they got through the 10 o'clock run satisfactorily, they can use these later slots to curry favour by having a *second* play with their presents.

Whichever way you look at it, it's a tight schedule. And it gets more complicated as the day wears on. In the morning the channels seem fairly content to match each other hymn for hymn and prayer for prayer, but by 11.30 the gloves are off, and also – from the child's angle – there's a chance that mum and dad will begin taking their first blink at the proceedings. For example, ITV are going for bust with nearly three hours-worth of *Dr Doolittle* from 11.30 until 2.15. A lot will depend here on whether or not the BBC has already hooked viewers with its single animal offering of *Rod Hull and Emu*. The children I've spoken to are icily determined to watch the film; they reason that although the emu is fine, and although they are also drawn to the Laurel and Hardy item that follows it, they will none the less end up at 1.20 lumbered with Brian Matthew introducing *Holiday on Ice*: this lasts an hour and is thought by the kids to be extremely bad news. But there are obstacles: if mum is going to start setting the table around 12, and if dad intends to hit the pub at around 12.30, both grown ups will opt for the bitty stuff on BBC. This could be the first flash-point of the day, but the children seem prepared to use up a fair amount of early nuisance-value in the cause: sulks, noises off, extra breakages, the odd bit of kitchen sabotage, etc. I think they'll win.

A similar determination will be needed at lunch-time, when both channels are putting on pop-music packages; presumably, the idea is that if you're vulgar enough to like the stuff, you'll be vulgar enough to eat while you're watching it. It is thought that this battle might well hinge on marginal figures like aunts and grannies; a good strategy is to work on these super-oldies the day before by pretending that *Top of the Pops* is the *only* Christmas show you've really set your heart on. There is a good chance, the little ones conjecture, that the old hag will secretly want to see it herself anyway.

After lunch, and after the Queen's Speech, the view is that adults will almost certainly start running things. ITV are putting the feature film *Please Sir!* against the BBC's obligatory *Billy Smart's Circus*; if the Doolittle battle in the morning has been won, the kids think they'll have had enough animals for one day, and they are prepared to trade in *Oliver*, with which the BBC follow Billy Smart, for the whole of *Please Sir!* and the admittedly dubious *New Faces* and *Sale of the Century*. A suggested compromise, since *Oliver* is 'all singing and I've seen it twice', is for them to tune into it half-way through. Not much strong feeling here, although one genuine childish fear is that if they stick with ITV, mum will want to watch (at 6.45) the *John Curry Spectacular* instead of *The Generation Game*. Again, they are prepared to get nasty on this point. Happily, it's getting close to opening time again, so there will be no dad to contend with. By this stage he will already have laid down the law about which evening film is going to be watched: *Waterloo* on ITV (one of the wittiest bits of Yuletide planning since the year they screened *Bad Day at Black Rock*) or *Airport* plus Morecambe and Wise on BBC. The juniors are bucking for *Airport* because it ends later, but provided they are not sent off to bed early with their lovely new edition of *Winnie the Pooh*, they're not too bothered. In any case, by this late hour they'll be busy refining their master-plan for Day Two. Four play-slots there, I'm told, and two major flashpoints, No problem, say the little ones; I mean, sod it, Xmas is for us.

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Films

John Coleman

Beasts and Beauties

Victory at Entebbe *Columbia; Warner West End 4; Cinecenta from 26 December*
King Kong *Casino; ABC Bloomsbury from 26 December*
The Scarlet Buccaneer *Empire*

Other versions are rumoured to be in the pipeline, but meanwhile we must make do with what Marvin Chomsky, who directed, and David L. Wolper, who produced, have manufactured from the raw material that began on 27 June this year, when four terrorists hijacked an Air France jumbo jet in flight over Greece, and ended – after a fashion – on 4 July with that fantastic Israeli raid and rescue of 103 hostages in Amin's Uganda. Mr Chomsky's credentials include a great deal of TV work of variable distinction and the feature film, *Evel Knievel*; Mr Wolper has produced more than 450 documentaries, among them the 1972 Olympics *Visions of Eight*, investigations of John F. Kennedy's assassination and a series of specials on Jacques Cousteau: their professionalism is not in question. What *is* would rather be their wisdom in getting this particular show on the road so rapidly: it may be box-office, but there are times when other considerations might well override the profit motive. *Victory at Entebbe* belongs to a prickly genre, of which we had a classic example in *All the President's Men*. While coming to praise, up to a point, I primly asked then, 'to what degree should we permit ourselves to be "entertained" by a less than accurate account of moral squalor in top places?'. This doubt about relishing the historically imprecise continues to plague me (of course, most documentaries simplify and even slant the truth, but in more evident ways) and all the more so when the history is recent and the ficitional treatment as crude as that provided by Ernest Kinoy. *Entebbe*, at its worst, could almost have been subtitled *Airport 1976*.

The main story sticks fairly consistently to what one garnered from the newspapers during those hectic, harrowing days; the seizure of the plane, the landing in Uganda, the separation of Israelis and Jews from the other passengers (some of whom were sent off to safety), the terrorists' first ultimatum, Israel's playing for time, Amin's duplicity, finally the incredible assault on Entebbe at nearly the last hour. Nor does the film cheat about the known statistics: a concluding title numbers the dead and admits certain details of the rescue operation must still remain secret. But there is a cardboard cheapness about the characterisation that detracts from the realities. The wretched Mrs Bloch, left behind in hospital and – on all the evidence – brutally murdered, becomes the indomitable Mrs Wise, who is played by the excellent Helen Hayes as a universal dispenser of solace and cheer, reading her Agatha Christie and worrying about a strange tin box of dates brought aboard by a passenger before take-off. There is chubby young Chana, a teenage girl bound for Paris, who dishes out chocolates to the pilots and even offers one to Helmut Berger as a nervous German hijacker. She is the occasion for Liz Taylor to be a mother, distraughtly chanting 'Chana, Chana, take off the red ribbon' as she hears the news at home: she fears no one will realise her daughter is only a child. Julius Harris impersonates a shrunken Idi Amin, at first saying 'Shalom' to the assembled hostages and promising his good offices,

then growing tougher, lecturing: 'Your government must pull up their socks . . . I told my good friend Golda Meir to pull up her knickers and go back to America.' It is the voice of lunacy, doncher knowing away as if for laughs, and it is just an actor aping a man of massive evil.

I shall probably be informed by some irate survivor that this is all exactly the way it was: chocolates, Amin's rant, even some mother in Jerusalem wailing about a sophisticated neck-ribbon. Very well, but not Miss Taylor and not – not ever, anywhere – so neatly, here a strong moment, there a scrap of light relief. A French-Canadian film, Michel Brault's *Orders*, which attempted a reconstruction of what occurred after the FLQ kidnapped our commercial attaché in Quebec in 1970, is worth a hundred *Entebbes*: this distinguished semi-document went into the Phoenix, East Finchley, in June and out again, as through a revolving door. *You* make or break a film: I can't.

Anyone who caught the 1933 *King Kong* on the box the other night is advised to stay with his memories. John Guillermin's new rendition, produced by the spendthrift Dino de Laurentiis, may have a bigger ape (a 40-foot mechanical model, weighing six-and-a-half tons, hydraulically controlled: Willis H. O'Brien, special effects man extraordinary, made do with 16-inch high dummies) but one would hardly notice it. Lorenzo Semple Jr has furnished a fresh script, upholstered with ecological stuffing and a few raunchy tatters of dialogue. Sweetish Fay Wray has been replaced by the utterly knowing Jessica Lange, a would-be actress found floating in a lifeboat after the yacht she was on exploded. Picked up by a ship financed by the Petrox Company scouting Micronesia for oil, this Dwan explains she had gone on deck to avoid a dirty movie below. 'What a meaningful miracle!' she breathes. 'Did you ever meet anyone before whose life was saved by *Deep Throat*?' Oil-prospector Wilson (Charles Grodin) and stowaway zoologist (Jeff Bridges) lead an expedition to the old island and the old giant wall is there as before with the superstitious natives cavorting around. Dwan is grabbed by the savages and left for Kong, who appears and lifts her ('I can't stand heights,' she howls).

'Oh, come on, Kong. Forget about me. This thing is just never going to work,' she remonstrates swoonily as a large, leathery finger runs over her. Nor does it. I suppose one might say the viewer is trapped between rival camps: the straightfaced matter of the ur-film and the half-spoof, half-morality capers of the Guillermin. As to pathos, the more primitive original wins by a mile. Impossible to believe Dwan's 'Hold on to me or they'll kill you' to the simian on top of New York's World Trade Center and beset by helicopters (Empire State and biplanes before) when she has previously addressed him as 'a goddam chauvinist pig ape'. However, there is so little recommendable in the cinemas this coming Yuletide, families fed up with telly might risk the outing. Be warned, however, that the Beast never had the glimmer of a chance against this Beauty.

James Goldstone's *The Scarlet Buccaneer* is some piratical hogwash, with Peter Boyle intricately miscast as wicked, foppish, fencing Lord Durant, acting Governor of Jamaica, who spends much of his leisure in a bath with his young catamite Genevieve Bujold as Jane Barnet, spunky daughter of the wrongfully deposed Chief Justice ('Pederast!' she spits at Boyle), and Robert Shaw looking gleeful – why? – as a gentleman sea-bandit, Ned Lynch. Accents clash as readily as cutlasses. Shaw and dusky James Earl Jones swap limericks somewhere, notably the gem that ends 'One black, one white and one khaki'. Let me not go mad.

Raking around for something genial to say about the year spent in the dark, I come wholeheartedly to praise Derek Hill for converting the old Bijou in Wardour Street into The Essential and Nick Hart-Williams and his gallant band for setting up The Other Cinema in Tottenham Street, an independent venue for independent film-makers. TOC is currently showing, in five programmes, the exotic documentary material, *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* authentically rich glimpses of the Chinese at work, in the home, at play. My own auto-critique: the promised longer discussion has not appeared, but I do urge attendance. It is a mind-opening experience. And long may The Gate and the Phoenix, two relative newcomers, flourish.

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Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Strolling Players

Wild Oats *Aldwych*
I Gotta Shoe *Criterion*
Betjemania *Shaw*

'Actors aren't gentlemen,' I was assured by a senior don at the Cambridge college where I briefly roosted a decade or so ago – or was it 'gentlemen don't act'? Either way, the message was plain. And if that was the wisdom that winged out from our halls of learning in the swinging Sixties, how much paltrier and more declassé must our thespians have felt around the time of Jane Austen's Sir Thomas Bertram, whose indignation at a private production of *Lovers' Vows* reduced a whole house-party to crawling remorse.

John O'Keeffe was still living then, a one-time actor forced by blindness to become a full-time playwright, and, if we're to judge by his *Wild Oats,* he had long felt edgy about his status as social untouchable. His hero, Rover, is a travelling player, an aspirant Kemble or Kean of unnaturally benign disposition, and his villains more or less defined themselves by their snooty and censorious attitude to his craft. That old insult, 'vagrant', rankles just a bit less when it comes from Farmer Gammon, whose hobby is oppressing the poor and smarming up to the rich. So does the regulation sneer at 'comedy, tragedy, prelude, interlude – yea, *all* lewd' when the speaker is a low-church hypocrite named Ephraim Smooth, himself all itchy fingers, hot saliva and knickers on the brain. At one point this prurient killjoy stomps dementedly on a copy of *As You Like It.* 'Trample on *Shakespeare*!' roars Rover, and, at any rate as Alan Howard pronounces it, a lifetime spent resisting philistine snubs is packed into that one, outraged phrase.

Of course, *Wild Oats* is a comedy, full of those deceptions, impersonations, eccentric alibis and unlikely reconciliations its period relished. There are several fizzing scenes, notably one in which Rover mistakes an enraged sea-dog for an actor called Abrawang – the more the old boy blusters, the warmer the praise for his performance. But what gives the play its originality is less O'Keeffe's wit and invention, which aren't extraordinary, than his egalitarianism, a firm if quiet levelling impulse, the persistently pressed suggestion that one man is as good as another, whatever his birth, job or the colour of his money. It's apparent in the very first encounter, when a manservant refuses to stand for his master, and is promptly complimented on his propriety. It's certainly there in the form of the heroine, a great lady who has dropped her title and become a Quaker. 'Ah, think, ye proud and happy affluent,' she cries, in what comes across as more than a period platitude, 'how many, in your dancing moments, drink the salt tear; their morsel, the bread of misery; and shrinking from the cold blast into their cheerless hovels.'

She continues relieving those salt tears until the end, but loses her fellow-sectarians' mistrust of the stage, and links herself to Rover, who is magically revealed to be a formal as well as a natural gentleman: a resolution to sate the fantasies of the blind, broke stroller, John O'Keeffe.

The audience, too, seemed happy. It has become the sacred duty of the RSC, that Refined Santa Claus, to bring class to our festivities, and this Christmas it has not let us down. Clifford Williams, who directs, has plucked several irresistible performances out of the sack – Patrick Godfrey's Smooth, ominously opining that 'the man of sin rubbeth the hair of the horse to the bowels

of the cat', and Lisa Harrow, so sweet and earnest as the sincerer sort of Quaker, and Norman Rodway's retired captain, still blasting off his verbal cannons and peppering the small craft around him with nautical metaphors. And then there is Mr Howard, a Dictionary of Quotations in buskins, stunning the uninitiated with the news that a truant disposition has brought him from Wittenberg, or that he's as hungry as the sea and can digest as much, or that he'll attend the men in the parlour 'were they 20 times our mother'. It's a colourful part, and a performance brimming with confidence, breezy spirits and wry, whimsical touches: a tribute from one of our finest contemporary actors to those who have preceded him, a graceful panegyric for the profession. O'Keeffe would have felt justified both as playwright and player.

Not long ago I had to visit a 'community home', alias approved school, in north-east England. There was, I learned, one story and one only that the girls liked to tell each other in the dorm at night, and that was *Cinderella.* What more pointed a myth is there for those who feel neglected or despised? It applies, surely, as naturally to blacks in the southern states as to delinquents in Newcastle-on-Tyne: and when I heard that Caryl Brahms and Ned Sherrin had translated the tale into a rock musical set in Louisiana, I could only applaud their perspicacity. But something has happened between conception and execution. Maybe money ran out. Maybe inspiration did. At any rate, the sense of place is sadly absent: New Orleans becomes the stage of the Criterion, decked out with a few fronds and a cuckoo-clock upper window, and peopled by Elizabeth Welch in an evening gown, Linda Lewis in a short white dress and three young men in what look like polished formica track-suits. Missing, too, is any recognition that *Cinderella,* for all its childishness, might have a point, a meaning, an emotional aptness for those with a history of oppression. Indeed, the story is hardly more than an excuse for what is called a 'medley' of songs, some old and some new, some borrowed and some blue.

But the glummest blues count for nothing if they're no more than hypochondriacal stabs of indigestion, burps among the sweetmeats. The evening's tone is irrevocably set in the first half, with the cast brightly assuring us, amid numbers about paper moons and Oscar Wilde, that

> You can count on a happy ending,
> If you see the evening through.

The warning is only too necessary, because *Cinderella* itself doesn't get under steam until after the interval, and even then is apt to fizzle into irrelevance or, worse, embarrassment. When little Miss Lewis, coy, cute and with a red ribbon in her hair, starts to sing that 'nobody knows the trouble I've seen, nobody knows my sorrow', adding 'glory alleluiah' as a throbbing bonus, we can only answer that nobody knows anything except that she has a pretty face, a nice voice and a general air of having just bounced out of a Pepsi-Cola ad. The fact is that *Shoe* lacks soul and style, which, as any reputable cobbler or critic will tell you, makes it hard for an audience to wear.

I don't suffer from *Betjemania,* which I see as a sort of word-blindness afflicting those entrusted with choosing poet laureates. But others feel differently, or there wouldn't be all that singing and recitation at the Shaw, gently inveigling us into that thatched imagination where picnickers are always finding sand in their sandwiches and wasps in their tea, genial uncles bellow 'come on, young uns, foot it fleetly', and sweaty virgins squeeze boyish fingers in the rhododendrons, breathing 'I'm your friend'. Nostalgia is the dominant note – for lost childhood and adolescence, and for lost England,

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desecrated by omnivorous bulldozers and pesticides and deep freezes and mock-Tudor pubs and young executives in Cortinas:

> Essentially I integrate the current
> export drive,
> And basically I'm viable from 10 o'clock
> to five . . .

Has Sir John ever met those people he patronises so glibly, or is he content to spin paranoid fantasies about them from Much-Moaning-in-the-Gloaming, or wherever he rests his distinguished pate? Towards the end something deeper touches the flannel-covered hot water bottle within his chest: age, decay, and death, the LCD that links bruising businessmen and bruised rhymers. But it is too late, too unemphatic. The evening as a whole, plausibly presented though it is, is cosy, wistful and old-maidish, a bathchair triumphant.

Jazz

Charles Fox

Come-On

The advertiser is never wrong. Not, at any rate, in guessing what image or slogan will beguile the uncommitted. Which raises the interesting matter of why jazz, one of the few four-letter words to become unfashionable in the 1960s, suddenly finds itself on the tip of the copy-writer's felt pen. It's not just those New Orleans veterans parading the merits of Colt 45. Being jazzy gets equated with being desirable in at least a couple of London Underground ads. Even some discos have started using the word as a come-on.

One or two of the bigger companies are having second thoughts too. Not those out-and-out giants, EMI and Decca, notoriously inelastic in their manoeuvering, but Atlantic, for example, who put money into publicising *That's Jazz*, 20 LPs, mostly recorded between 1957 and 1962, all available separately at £3.29. Two of them, Charles Mingus's *Blues and Roots* (K50232) and John Coltrane's *Giant Steps* (K50239), have surfaced in these columns already. Two others symbolise separate ways of being Afro-American: Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* (K50240) was the first extended exercise in free collective improvising; Joe Turner's singing on *The Boss Of The Blues* (K50240) has a Homeric tilt to it, his lyrics a candour like Thomas Nashe's ('You're so beautiful but you gotta die some day').

Further reissues from the same era make up a set of Milestone 'twofers' (without waiting for Vol. 3 of the OED Supplement to explain, this means two LPs sold for, in this case, rather more than the price of one, viz. £4.99). *Thelonious Monk : In Person* (M-47033) juxtaposes two 'live' performances, one of them presenting bigger band versions of some of Monk's bumpiest tunes. John Coltrane and Donald Byrd help to justify the title of *Elmo Hope: The All-Star Sessions* (M-47037), but real substance is supplied by the pianist-leader, especially his compositions, salty yet lyrical. Only 44 when he died in 1967, Hope remains as neglected as he was brilliant.

There is, in fact, no shortage of reissues (French RCA and French CBS, both imported here, are intrepidly charting Duke Ellington's entire recording career for their labels, unissued 'takes' and all). But healthiness lies in the here-and-now rather than in the past. What might be called the middle ground is nourished lovingly by Norman Granz, the only major record producer to run a label in the same way that good magazines get edited – as a reflection of his personal taste. Plenty of Granz's LPs have been reviewed here already. Another pair worth mentioning are *Basie and Zoot* (Pablo 2315 745, £3.25), with, inevitably, Count Basie and Zoot Sims incarnating the highest virtues of the jazz bourgeoisie, and *Youngblood* (Pablo 2310 765, £3.25), the work of Jon Faddis, a young trumpeter who has gone back to the 1940s for inspiration. (The best, and most unusual, track is an adaptation – for trumpet – of Gershwin's second Piano Prelude.)

Another trumpeter, Miles Davis, celebrated his 50th birthday last summer. After a period when he seemed, almost perversely, intent on obliterating his identity as a soloist, Davis's *Agharta* (CBS 88159, 2 LPs: £4.49), allegedly recorded at a concert in Osaka (if so, the Japanese seem never to clap or cough), communicates in a fairly direct and down-to-earth way. Carla Bley may not be the first woman composer in jazz (that distinction belongs to Mary Lou Williams, back in the Thirties); more importantly, she is one of the best of either sex, as the Gary Burton Quintet confirm in their performances of seven of Ms Bley's compositions on *Dreams So Real* (ECM 1072, distributed by Virgin Records: £3.85). Although the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis LP, *Suite for Pops* (A & M SP701, £3.60) is mostly a tribute to Louis Armstrong, composed by Thad, the most memorable of these big band tracks is Gary McFarland's piece, *Toledo By Candlelight*; very astringent. Also on A & M is *Closeness* (AMLJ 710, £3.60), a set of duets, the bassist Charlie Haden teaming up successively with Ornette Coleman, Keith Jarrett ((both in stunning form), Alice Coltrane on harp (much too decorative) and percussionist Paul Motian (good, apart from brief samplings of the MPLA anthem and gunfire from the Angolan battle front).

Duets seem suddenly to have caught on again in jazz. More turn up on *Baubles, Bangles and Beads* (Wave LP 12, £3.25), this time by the British bassist Peter Ind, and the Irish guitarist, Louis Stewart, giving fresh accounts of familiar territory. Peter Ind runs Wave himself (at 11 Swakeleys Drive, Ickenham, Middlesex). It's one of a number of small labels that are enabling local musicians to outflank the major companies. Tony Williams, a bebop authority, started Spotlite (at 103 London Road, Sawbridgeworth, Herts) to reissue rarities from the Forties, but the policy has been widened. The Don Rendell Five's *Just Music* (Spotlite SPJ502, £2.80) has two saxophonists in the front line: Rendell himself, a veteran yet still full of curiosity, and Barbara Thompson (at her finest in *Blues For Adolphe Sax*). Orgun (at 35 Eton Avenue, London NW3 3EP) has just brought out *Blue Notes for Mongesi* (Ogun OGD 001/002, 2 LPs: £5.50), a tribute to the black South African trumpeter, Mongesi Feza, recorded a few days after his death – in December, 1975 – by Dudu Pukwana, Chris McGregor (it's a shame the piano is far from perfect), Johnny Dyanni and Louis Moholo, all of whom, like Mongesi, arrived in Britain with The Blue Notes halfway through the Sixties.

No jazz-rock? No avant-garde? No New Orleans fundamentalism? Plenty was released during 1976, but those records will have to wait. Overlapping increases, categorising gets harder. Only a week ago somebody in a pub was assuring me that Led Zeppelin play jazz. Wishful thinking maybe, but at least the word is spreading.

Art

John Spurling

Work to Rule

Malevich – Graphic Work *ICA*
Peasant Paintings from Hu County *Warehouse Gallery* (until 23 December)
A Tonic to the Nation *Victoria & Albert Museum*
Jewellery through 7000 Years *British Museum*
Beyond Light *Serpentine Gallery*

Mao Tse-Tung, whose memory I otherwise revere, thought that art should serve politics: 'Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole revolutionary cause; they are, as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine.' It is ironic that most of the paintings of Kasimir Malevich, the outstanding artist of the Russian Revolution, should be languishing in the storage areas of Soviet museums, since he himself apparently agreed with Lenin:

> futurism will become the art representative of the environment of the working man, whose job it is to build machines (to construct dynamic elements), since his dynamic life forms the substance of this artistic culture.

Of course he committed the heresy of believing art to be the independent consort of politics, the artist a fellow-machinist rather than just one of the cogs and wheels. So instead of opening the way to the new world of the '10th land', where the old civilisation is entirely swept away and there is perpetual change, as adumbrated in the opera *Victory Over the Sun* on which he collaborated, he became one of the father-figures of Western abstractionists and died in Russia after being twice arrested and making a tentative return to representation. Like other victims of Stalinism, it was a case of being hoist with his own petard. His doctrine of Suprematism (symbolised by the famous black square on white of 1915) rested on the aggressive displacement of all art that had gone before and when, in 1919

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he accepted the invitation of Marc Chagall, then director of the Vitebsk Art Labour Co-operative, to join the faculty, it was only a matter of months before Malevich had gathered a sufficient following among students and faculty to force Chagall to resign the directorship in his favour.

But ironically again, although his own machine consumed him, the exhibition of graphic work from the Israel Museum, now at the ICA, is as powerful a visual manifesto for revolution as could be imagined. Just as in the recent show of his drawings at the Tate, it is astonishing how these very small, almost dusty images of black, white and grey sticks and slats flying across one another in a white void expand to enormous proportions in the mind, somehow combining a sense of ecstatic destruction with the limitless possibilities of reconstruction. Malevich did not make prints as works of art in their own right, but simply to illustrate his copious writings. Without having seen more than the two paintings included in the Tate show, it is difficult to judge his full stature as an artist, for which Donald Karshan's catalogue raisonné makes the highest claims, but as a *revolutionary* artist Malevich makes you feel what it was that Lenin and his successors were quick to destroy as soon as they had the power.

Mao's dictum predictably prefaces the catalogue for the Arts Council's exhibition of Chinese peasant paintings at the Warehouse Gallery. These are, in his terms, exactly what was called for: simple, brightly-coloured illustrations (many of which look as if they were painted by numbers) of peasants at their rural and political pursuits. Strength is in every arm, smiles wreathe every face – except in the painting called *Criticising Lin Piao and Confucius before the remains of an ancient slave-owner's war chariots*, where all the mouths are turned down – and bumper harvests, whether of pigs, tomatoes, jujubes or turnips, are gathered in for the glory of China. In spite of the ordinariness of the settings and the great number of human figures depicted, there is a dispiriting absence both of reality and humanity. With one or two exceptions – a miraculous and energetic draught of fishes and a pleasant pattern of white goats on a green ground – it is a world outside nature and art, the visual equivalent of a party political broadcast.

Our own collective attempt at nationalistic self-congratulation, the Festival of Britain, is not very helpfully recalled by the current exhibition at the V & A. It does contain the enormous embroidered relief mural, *The Country Wife*, depicting members of the Women's Institute at their various trades which, as a paeon to simple busy-ness, makes the Chinese paintings look inadequate even on their own level; otherwise the show is frankly a load of old bric-à-brac. The accompanying book, however, edited by Mary Banham and Bevis Hillier, contains a thorough overhaul of the whole subject from every point of view – serious and trivial – and even leaves one with some understanding of Marghanita Laski's extraordinary statement that the Festival was 'the nicest thing that happened in England in my life'.

The jewellery show at the British Museum is also accompanied by a fat and indispensable book. Wandering round these cases of pretty baubles, all from the Museum's own collection and drawn from the period 5000 B.C. to A.D. 1850, it is hard to make distinctions of time or place. The precious materials do not show their age, the workmanship of a Sumerian gold head-piece is as striking as that of an ivory armlet from Benin or a set of agate belt-plaques from T'ang China, and all the pieces are variations on the same theme, the enhancement of individuals. Not that all cultures were content merely to adorn the fingers and ears with rings, the throat with necklaces, pendants or torcs, the wrists with bracelets or the breast with brooches. The Peruvians hung large sheets of gold from their noses, the Japanese concentrated exclusively on decorating their hair, the Mayans wore polished obsidian plugs 'through a perforation in the lower lip', while a dead Welshman of the Early Bronze Age was found to be wearing an elaborately ridged (to suggest the fall of cloth) sheet-gold cape over his shoulders. The catalogue admits one gracefully to these and other more subtle distinctions – an esoteric world of filigree and fibula, champlevé and cabochon. Indeed I took as much pleasure in the exact technical descriptions of every item as in contemplation of the objects themselves.

The Serpentine Gallery, bravely challeng-

So many of our readers have expressed their appreciation of Garland's cartoons that we have decided to issue a collection of ten prints representative of his work for the New Statesman over the past three years.

The cartoons have been selected as outstanding examples not only of Garland's skill as draughtsman but also of the wit and perception which he brings to the passing political scene.

Together they form a unique gallery of the personalities, notable and notorious, of the day.

The cartoons are printed on high quality paper, size 8½" x 12½", and each set comes in an attractive wallet and costs only £2, post free in the UK.*

We still have some sets in stock. They make excellent presents — belatedly for Christmas; also for birthdays and other occasions in the New Year. They are worth having for yourself.

**To addresses abroad the prices are £2.50 by surface mail and £3.50 by air.*

Send your order with remittance to

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ing the dark midwinter, is showing two artists who work with light. Liliane Lijn's groups of small prisms and perspex figures glitter and flash with colour under the spotlights at the same time as casting interesting shadows on the walls behind; her other room contains tall, slowly-turning rods with irregularly faceted surfaces down which reflected light runs in thin wavering streams. If the means seem a little too elaborate for the results, it is an elegant event, elegantly displayed. Bill Culbert's naked light bulbs in boxes and before mirrors are cruder in appearance, but curiously sympathetic, reminiscent of theatrical dressing-rooms: as though, while the humans down below strutted and fretted as Lear or Lady Bracknell, the bulbs upstairs were quietly rehearsing their own humbler repertoire of illusion.

Ballet

Oleg Kerensky

Xmas Crackers

The end of the year sees the birth of a new ballet company and the imminent death of a recently born one. Sorrow outweighs pleasure, because the New London Ballet was filling a real need – taking ballet to small places, commissioning works from a wide range of British choreographers and displaying soloists of strong stage personality and technique, led by Samsova and Prokovsky, two real stars. It's strange that the Arts Council can't find a way of keeping them alive, and sad that the mooted merger with Northern Dance Theatre proved abortive.

The birth of a new company is nevertheless to be celebrated, even if it does not at first sight seem to fill any specific need and even if it was born under the cloud of apartheid. This seems to have lifted – Ballet International's inaugural tour of South Africa was fraught with so many problems that future tours have been postponed indefinitely – and with them the South African money which was to have paid for the company's productions seems to have vanished. It will need managerial wizardry and extremely good takings to have any hope of survival. Last week, doing better business than the Royal Ballet at the Bristol Hippodrome, it looked as if it might just pull off the trick.

Ballet International's repertoire – *Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty* and four modern works quaintly described as a 'special triple bill' – looks uncomfortably like a watered-down version of Festival's or the Royal touring section's. They don't have any real stars, though Samsova, Prokovsky and Ivan Nagy are listed as guest artists for the future, and Fonteyn is dancing with the company in Holland next month. On the other hand they are currently taking *The Nutcracker* to towns which would not otherwise see it: Blackpool this week, Paignton 17-22 January, Newcastle 7-12, Eastbourne 14-19, Oxford 21-26 February and Coventry 28 February-5 March. Ben Stevenson's production is traditional and well arranged to delight children.

In three different casts, the most exciting performance of the famous pas de deux was by Gaye Fulton and Woytek Lowski, a very stylish dancer from Boston. The company also has an oriental contingent, notably Catherine Yoshimura, an expressive little Clara, Kah-Joo Chua dancing nimbly and precisely in the *mirliton* pas de trois and Rodwic Fukino, from Hawaii, a convincingly mechanical toy soldier.

Nureyev's *Nutcracker* is of course much more original and much more interesting for adults. It is also, naturally, better danced, with stars in the leads. At the first night Nureyev himself was in particularly good form, as if to prove that filming Valentino has not marred his dancing, and Merle Park was perfectly cast as Clara. Leslie Collier and David Wall are also dancing the leads – Wall is flourishing on all the extra work caused by Dowell's injury, and Collier's recent *Swan Lake* suggested that she is now emerging as a ballerina to be reckoned with.

On the whole, however, the future of the Royal Ballet looks brighter on the male side than on the female. Wayne Eagling, who danced the Prince to Collier's Swan Queen, is past the promising stage and is now a fine and very good-looking dancer, but he hasn't developed the dramatic skill or strength of personality to hold attention. Mark Silver seems to be going from strength to strength in technique, appearance and personality, and could become a star in the Christopher Gable-Anthony Dowell class, Derek Deane is now shining regularly alongside him in a number of technically demanding solos, and Stephen Beagley emerged in *The Nutcracker* as an unusually sympathetic and strong Fritz.

It's sometimes considered rather poor taste for ballet critics to pine for stars, so I'm delighted that Alexander Bland, in his very attractive new pictorial history (*A History of Ballet and Dance* Barrie & Jenkins £7.95), makes no bones about the need for them. He is also healthily sceptical about the prospects for choreography, particularly in 'modern dance'.

The Royal Ballet still has Ashton, or at least it had him once this year when he created *A Month in the Country*. It also has MacMillan, but encouraged him to stage his Fauré *Requiem* in Stuttgart; reliable reports suggest that, ironically, it is his best ballet for years and possibly his best ever. But it's modern dance that is supposed to have all the creative ideas. Certainly the London Contemporary season at the Wells has been varied, theatrical and popular. Gone are the days when the repertoire was all gloom, mime and speech, with little dancing and less impact. The company now dance well, as is most apparent in a display piece like Robert Cohan's *Class*, which has benefited from a new, specially written score by Geoffrey Burgon and which I found the most satisfying work in the whole season. Cohan's new creations are theatrical and exciting, with bold lighting and scenic effects, but they make their impact as a pop concert does, rather than by any appeal to intellect or coherent aesthetic scheme. Siobhan Davies goes to the opposite extreme – her works are so small-scale that they appeal only to those who happen to be on the same private wavelength.

Contemporary dance is inclined to neglect comedy. I wish more of Cohan's choreographers would take inspiration from the Martha Graham of *Acrobats of God*, or from Paul Taylor. Namron has done so; *The Bronze* is a Robert Dhéry cabaret joke, slightly sick, about two boys and a girl on the beach. One boy pretends to be a statue, flirts charmingly with the girl in a pas de deux, goes back to being a statue. The other boy bounces a ball against him, and he drops dead. On that note, and with the prospect of yet another *Nutcracker* – Ronald Hynd's for Festival Ballet – I turn towards the New Year.

Weekend Competition

No 2444 **Set by Snubbin**

The dismissive triad (e.g., Churchill's summary of naval tradition as 'rum, sodomy and the lash') is not as popular as it used to be, though the Rev. Ken Leech had a tolerable stab at one recently when he characterised metropolitan Anglo-Catholicism as 'lace, gin and backbiting'. Derisive triplets for any organisation, profession, party or institution are hereby solicited. By 14 January.

No 2441 **Set by Spiro Keats**

As I was going to St Pauls
A lady grabbed me by the elbow . . .

Competitors were asked to provide more lines in this regrettable vein.

Report **by Spiro Keats**

Festive greetings! . . . A bit punchdrunk here, quite frankly, from all the schoolboy lewdness and disgracefully telegraphed non-rhymes. So, there was a young lady who stood in a punt, was there? (You'll never guess what she didn't do next.) Still, I've only myself to blame, I suppose – what with the Editor's new ploy of forwarding to me all the letters of crazed rebuke he receives whenever the comp is *risqué*. I stand by my winners, however, all of whom showed that obscenity has its own sense of decorum. £8 apiece, and see you in the new year.

If you can ride the storm aboard a lugger,
And bravely manage in the wind to spit;
If you can hold your own against a head-wind,
And laugh to find yourself knee-deep
in spray;

If you can face the mighty ocean's bucking,
And fix your eyes unswerving to the front;
If you can stand all night and keep on compass,
And still have strength enough for one
more watch;

If you can laugh at Fate, the Gods ignoring,
And keep a steady course between the rocks;
If all your days and nights are spent in sailing –
The chances are, you'll end up with the first
prize in the *Observer* single-handed
Transatlantic Race.

ALBAN GIRRAL

Touring. Our train wound through Sri Lanka.

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On it, a wristy turbanned spinner.
Ceylon's reply to Tony Lock.
He'd suckered many a foreign wicket
With lures of length from Leeds to Lucknow
'Sir,' he said, 'let's have a chinwag.'
Smell of history, smell of grass,
Were sweet nostalgia from his lips.
And I saw Lords, the batsman's Mecca,
Great W.G.'s stupendous off-drive
Piercing the covers, muscled art
That tuned the willow to its song . . .
I dreamed awhile. When I awoke
The spinner cried: 'Game for a net?'
No, begging bowler! Though you'd float 'em
Long, long ago, to tug my heart-strings!

ROBERT MACWRIGHT

I dreamed I dwelt in marble halls
Of ample airs and sumptuous tinge,
While odalisques caressed my cheeks,
Each with a moist and willing palm.

I dreamed I sauntered on the front
At Cannes, where I had moored my yacht.
The movie stars! The lavish cars!
The fine display of Gallic charm!

I dreamed I discoed at the Ritz –
The evening warm, the music cool –
And gorgeous girls who tossed their curls
Admired my sleek and well-hung clothes.

But then I woke, and cursed my luck;
My heart relapsed, my spirits sank.
No yacht in France, no girls, no dance –
No option but to have a doze.

BASIL RANSOME

When angry, I am neither prim nor dumb.
With mealy-mouthed prigs I brook no truck,
Thus when the erring hammer strikes my thumb,
I come right out with
Bum! Bum! Bum! Bum! Bum!

Expletives picturesque and blistering
Flow from my lips like lava. It's my trick
To make all waiting traffic-wardens sting
With blasts like 'You're a wet and droopy thing!'

In frost, my Mini's starter-motor sticks,
Whenever I am late it pulls this stunt,
So I attack the thing with savage kicks,
And scream to heaven
Knicks! Knicks! Knicks! Knicks! Knicks!

With Income Tax Demands I'm really curt.
My robust, pointed oaths would shatter glass;
I simply scrawl across them brief and pert:
Dear Sir or Madam, Stuff this up your shirt!

GERRY HAMILL

As I was going to Saint Paul's
A lady took me by the Ball's
Pond Road, to see if I would care
Just to go and see her bare
Her soul down at the New Sugawn
(A pub where you can get the Horn
Of plenty in the way of drama);
I thought that I would have to ram her
Through the crowd to get her in
To the place where she would scin-
Tillate till ten, or thereabouts
(After a few I had my doubts).
And then it came from out her stock –
About the most enormous Cock
And Bull Tale heard, it made me vexed . . .
(To be continued in our next).

BILL MANLEY

Old Maggie and I were in this punt:
And then a bloke cried out 'You there:
Your navigation is a farce.
That end's your front, and that's derrière.'
I wondered why he'd run amuck –
And saw we'd caught him in mid-stroke.
(The lady who made up his crew
Was patently enjoying the joke.)
We quickly took the Surrey station
And left them to their fortune's keeping.
Both waves and weather were now dandy
And Maggie cried 'I feel like weeping'.
I couldn't quite believe my ears:
Old Maggie – one of Nature's hearties . . .
Still, people often change. So, quick,
I offered her my lovely Smarties.

V. F. CORLEONE

Tony Miles

Chess

The last English representative has been eliminated from the current world championship series. Jana Hartston finished a disappointing 6th in her Interzonal at Roosendaal, Holland. After scoring 5/7 in the first half of the tournament she faded badly in the later stages and ended with only 7½/13, 1½ points short of both the newly-created Woman GM title and a place in the Candidates' matches.

First place was shared between Alla Kushnir (Israel), who has for a long time been rated the No. 2 woman player in the world, and a 19-year-old Russian Elena Ahmilovskaya, who was practically unknown before the tournament but led throughout, acquired the GM title with 2 rounds to spare – previously she was not even an IM – and was caught only when she lost in the last round, having already clinched her place in the Candidates'.

Half a point behind, with 9/13, came Alexandra van der Mije (Holland) and Tatiana Lematchko (Bulgaria) both of whom thus gained the GM title and must play off for the final place in the next stage of the World Championship cycle.

Other scores: 5: Z. Veroczi (Hungary) 8½, 6: J. Hartston (England) 7½, 7: L. Belavenets (USSR) 7, 8/9: T. Fomina (USSR) & M. Lazarevic (Yugoslavia) 6½, 10: C. Vreeken (Holland) 5½, 11: R. Orton (USA) 5, 12: M. de Oliveira (Brazil) 4, 13: I. de Caro (Columbia) 2½, R. Gramignani (Italy) 1.

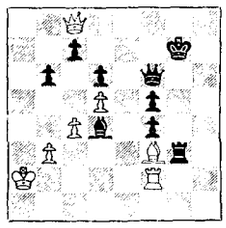
The diminutive Kushnir suffered an early loss to Lematchko, but soon regained her confidence and was never really in danger of not qualifying. Ahmilovskaya played quietly and very sensibly after a nervous 1st round draw with her compatriot Fomina, drew her next two games and then produced a burst of 7½/8 much to everyone's surprise, apparently herself included. Van der Mije played very well especially considering that illness almost forced her withdrawal early in the tournament, but undoubtedly the most entertaining chess was produced by Lematchko.

The Bulgarian (who would seem more at home throwing a discus than playing chess) was absolutely murderous with white, generally demolishing the opposition at great speed, but more than a little vulnerable with black:

White: Z. Veroczi. Black: T. Lematchko.

1. P-K4, P-QB4; 2. N-KB3, P-Q3; 3. P-Q4, P x P; 4. N x P, N-KB3; 5. N-QB3, P-QR3; 6. P-B4, P-K4; 7. N-B3, QN-Q2; 8. P-QR4, P-QN3. Probably black should play 8 . . . Q-B2 to prevent white's next. **9. B-B4, B-K2; 10. 0-0, 0-0; 11. Q-K2, B-N2; 12. P x P, P x P; 13. B-KN5, P-KR3; 14. B x N, N x B; 15. QR-Q1, Q-B2; 16. K-R1, KR-B1;** Presumably to vacate KB1 for the B in the event of a WN landing on KB5, but it is surely more important to keep this R for the defence of the King. **17. B-N3, B-N5?** Leaving the K completely bare as white convincingly proves. One better idea was . . . P-N3 followed by K-N2 to shield the weak point at K-B4. **18. N-R4! B x N;** Better is . . . B-K2. **19. R x N! P x R. 20. N-B5, B-Q5;** 20. . . . K-R2; 21. Q-R5 doesn't help matters. **21. Q-N4 ch, K-B1; 22. Q-N7 ch, K-K1; 23. Q-N8 ch, K-Q2; 24. Q x P ch, K-Q1; 25. Q-B8 ch Resigns.** On 25 . . . K-Q2; 26. Q-K7 ch, K-B3; 27. B-Q5 is mate.

Kushnir v. De Oliveira produced another amusing episode. Kushnir having mishandled the opening horribly and so been lost throughout scrambled her way into the position shown on this board. Now the game continued:



42. R-R2, Q-B1; 43. Q-Q7 ch, K-B3; 44. Q-K6 ch, K-N2; 45. Q-R6 ch, K-B2; Now white has a draw, but black was one of the weaker players, so she tried for more. **46. Q-K6 ch, K-N2; 47. Q-R6 ch, K-B2; 48. Q-R7 ch, B-N2; 49. Q x P ch, K-N1; 50. Q-R7 ch, K-B2; 51. B-R5 ch, K-B3; 52. R-K2, R-K6; 53. Q-N6 ch, K-K4; 54. R-KN2, B-B3; 55. B-N4, K-Q5!** Escaping through the front door. **56. B-B8.** Preventing the threatened . . . Q-R1 ch. **56. . . . B-K4; 57. R-Q2 ch.** If, for instance 57. B-Q7, P-B6; 58. R-Q2 ch, K-B6! 59. Q-B2 ch, K-N5; 60. P-B5, Q-R1 ch; 61. B-R4, Q x B ch! 62. P x Q, R-R6 ch; 63. K-N1, R-R8 mate. **57. . . . K-B6! 58. Q-B2ch, K-N5; 59. P-B5, P-N4.** Now white is dead – the black K is perfectly safe and the WB cannot be defended – however she finds one last try – amazingly it saves the piece. **60. Q-B1! R x P; 61. P-B6! Q x B; 62. R-Q4 ch! B x R; 63. Q-B4 ch!** The point now P or K x Q is stalemate but **63. . . . K-R4! 64. Q-R4ch! K-N3! 65. Q x B ch, K-R3; 66. K x R.** White has saved the piece but remains with a hopelessly lost ending. Now 66 . . . Q-R6 ch and she can resign. Instead **66 . . . Q-B4??? happened and 67. Q-R1 ch, K-N3; 68. Q-Q4 ch, K-R3; 69. Q-R1 ch Draw!**

In the male world championship, the Candidates' pairings are Fischer (!?) v Hort, Larsen v Portisch, Polugaevsky v Mecking, and the grudge match Korchnoy v Petrosian.

England's best chance of a world title in the immediate future lies with Jonathan Mestel in the World Junior Championship just starting in Holland. This year it has been combined with the annual European Junior Championship, which gives rise to some confusion. In the past not only have the age limits differed – which I believe has been remedied – but both competitions qualified the winner for the IM title. Now it seems that if the event is won by a non-European then both he and the highest European get the title, otherwise the victor gets it twice!

Also starting soon is the annual pagan festival commonly known as the Hastings International Chess Congress. On this occasion the Premier tournament is reverting to its ancient tradition with the Christians – at the last count led by Messrs Webb and Rumens – being thrown to assorted alien lions from 2 p.m. daily in the White Rock pavilion.

Of the lions to watch this year perhaps the most interesting is the young Russian Oleg Romanishin who may well take first place ahead of his better-known rivals.

December problems

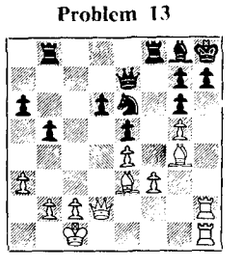
Here are the last two problems in the December series.

Problem 13: White to play. How should the game go?

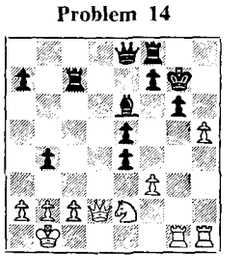
Problem 14: Black played 1 . . . BxPch. Comments please.

For the benefit of those who are unable to send in solutions regularly there will be a special prize of £10 to the sender of the first correct solutions to this week's problems opened in January.

Problem 13



Problem 14



Solution to Problem 11: 1. R-Q7! Q x Rch; 2. K-R2 and now 2 . . . R-N2; 3. R-Q8ch, or 2 . . . Q-B4; 3 R x P ch mates.

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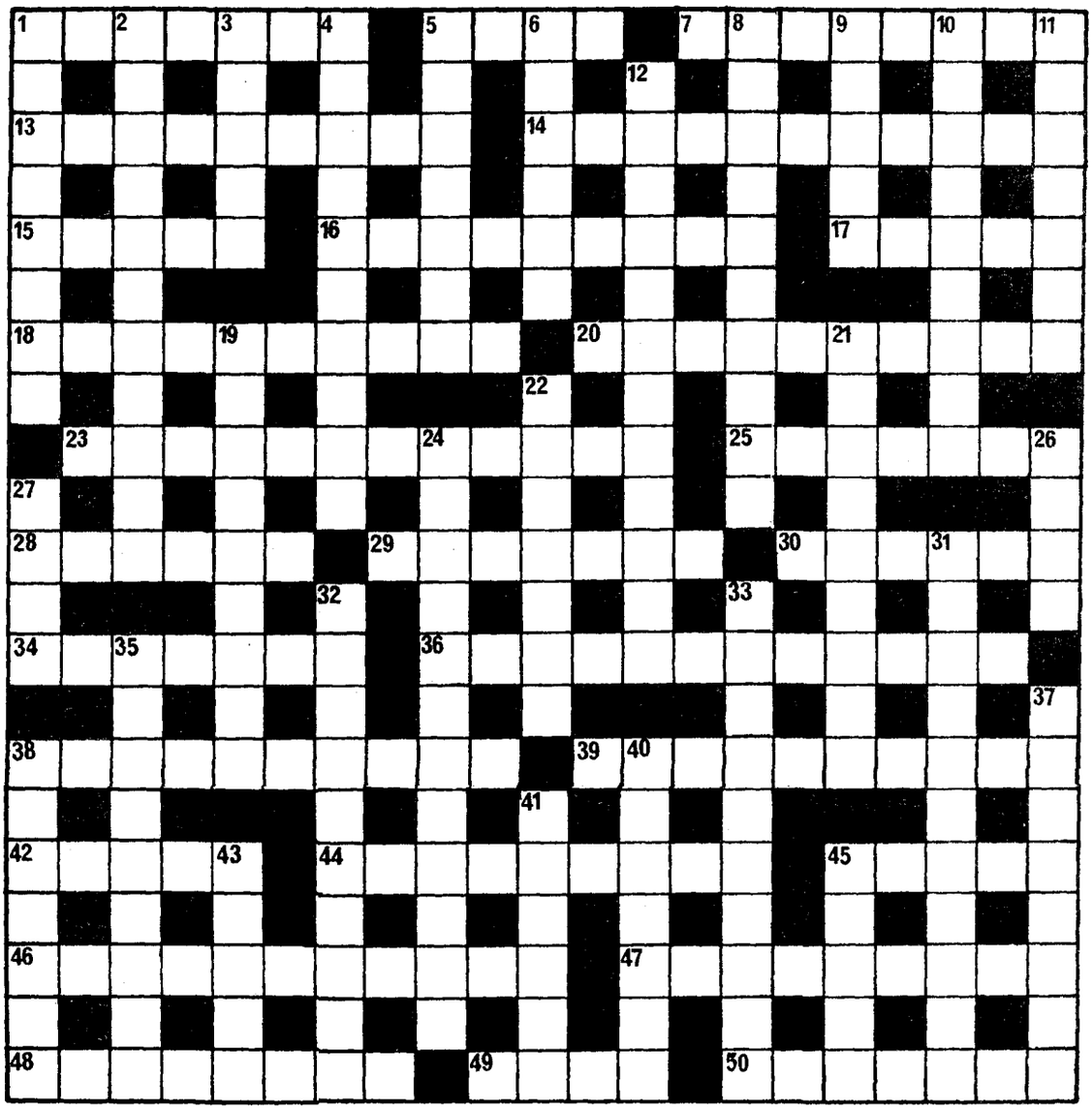
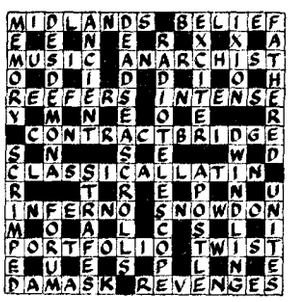


CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD 1196

WITH BIGGER PRIZES

Book tokens of £5 for the first five correct solutions opened. Entries to Christmas Crossword 1196, New Statesman, Great Turnstile London WC1V 7HJ by first post 11 January 1977.

Solution to No 1194



Prizewinners to No 1194

Mme F. Hill (Paris)
Brian Pearce (New Barnet)
I. Tipton (Borth)

ACROSS

1. Locum tenens taken out of a GP post (7).
5. Give Machin something for Christmas (4).
7. Flower as Christmas decoration? (8).
13. Turner? Or alternatively elect Ford! (9).
14. They are inserted in sentences in essays by father unfinished (11).
15. Composer of subtle harmonies (5).
16. Shuffle the back row (9).
17. Something to eat put into colossal mincepies (5).
18. This thing turns out to be about right as a garment (10).
20. Oxford student who should be good at coping with the Christmas mail? (10).
23. Charles is carrying on in a Christmassy month (5, 7).
25. Stuffy broadcast serials (7).
28. Composer for stylish and elegant occasions (6).
29. The point of holly (7).
30. Country in which I come to be mixed up with the Cross (6).
34. Old title which has to finish in that the fief disintegrates (7).
36. Time of peace, but there is frozen fog amid a little sunshine (9, 3).
38. One of these displays would show how reds are confused about Hitler's men (5, 5).
39. A moment after a bird becomes a fabulous creature (10).
42. Christmas-tree decoration which is feminine and insubstantial (5).
44. Postboy who has letters with one symbol of Britain on (9).
45. Drink to Santa Claus, for example (5).
46. Freely took a pinch without starting anything, being a pirate (7, 4).
47. False denial about money being returned to secure an election result (9).
48. What the kings had in various respects (8).
49. Information from all quarters (4).
50. Longed for some time back home (7).

DOWN

1. Digs land not kept in order, thus imposing a burden (8).
2. Where there is little hope of putting in one (3, 3, 5).
3. Authoress admitted to agree revision of contract (5).
4. Coats which cover a man's thighs (10).
5. Pirate has what sounds like a rough manner (7).
6. Account for what could be the sound of a cracker (6).
8. Touching the circle to gain talent informally (10).
9. Those unusual customs (5).
10. Permit love in unusual times as an excuse for kissing (9).
11. More dangerous for a winter sportsman from an American state (7).
12. No half prices are available for country lovers (12).
19. Seats include two points and they make three (5, 4).
21. Welcome holding people under a treaty (9).
22. Coin depicting Her Majesty in the reverse of what may be sent at Christmas (7).
24. Entertainer who gives an exhibition of ancient English cleverness (6, 6).
26. A circle enclosed by three points which is welcome at Christmas (4).
27. A girl without love, Cinderella lost something like it (4).
31. The artist's creative power locates the Three Wise Men in one country (11).
32. Enough money to make the crew write on this across the Channel (10).
33. Choose a simpleton for a child (10).
35. Unconditional inheritance makes the payment easy (9).
37. One who cares for animals would be broken-hearted if he lost a large number (8).
38. Abandons the side for faults (7).
40. One is in parts inferior to a duck or other birds (7).
41. Dickens character who has victory before the game is up (6).
43. Agent for raising dough (5).
45. Girl who gives up her advantage (5).

SETSQUARE

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WIDOW TWANKEY'S ANSWERS

The Widow's Questions

1: Sally Oppenheim
2: Chiang Ching
3: Lilian Craig
4: Isabel Perón
5: Elizabeth Ray
6: Martha Mitchell
7: Betty Ford
8: Barbara Castle
9: Mary Wilson
10: Madame Prunier

Women in Common

1: Moura Budberg
2: Lou Andreas-Salomé
3: Caroline Blackwood
4: Elizabeth Jane Howard
5: Elizabeth Rees-Williams
6: Lady Caroline Lamb
7: Britt Ekland
8: Elizabeth Taylor
9: Alma Mahler
10: George Sand

Redeeming Features

1: Helen
2: Cleopatra
3: Jane Russell
4: Little Polly Flinders
5: Betty Grable

Westminster Wives

1: Joseph
2: Maudling
3: Callaghan
4: Whitelaw
5: Shore
6: Healey
7: Crosland
8: Thatcher
9: Hattersley
10: Williams

Husbandry

1: Iris Murdoch
2: George Eliot
3: Margaret Drabble
4: Charlotte Brontë
5: Nell Dunn
6: George Sand
7: Mary McCarthy
8: Colette
9: Katherine Mansfield
10: Sylvia Plath

Heroine Addicts

1: Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*
2: Violet Elizabeth Bott in the William stories
3: the unnamed heroine of *Rebecca*
4: Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*
5: Marian Maudsley in *The Go-Between*
6: Emma Bovary
7: Tess of the D'Urbevilles
8: Daisy Miller
9: Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*
10: Gwendolen Grandcourt in *Daniel Deronda*

Birds of Avon

1: Viola in *Twelfth Night*
2: Rosalind in *As You Like It*
3: Imogen in *Cymbeline*
4: Portia in *Merchant of Venice*
5: Julia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*
6: Celia in *As You Like It*
7: sister of Ferdinand in *The Tempest*
8: Desdemona's mother's maid in *Othello*
9: Henry IV pt II
10: *The Taming of the Shrew*

Strange Deaths

1: Mary Wollstonecraft
2: Isadora Duncan
3: Joan of Arc
4: Amy Robsart, Countess of Leicester
5: Amy Johnson
6: Messalina
7: Emily Davidson
8: Boadicea
9: Elizabeth Siddall
10: Rosa Luxemburg

Margarets

1: Gerard Manley Hopkins's
2: Matthew Arnold's ('The Forsaken Merman')
3: Lady Margaret Beaufort
4: Powell
5: Maggie May
6: of Anjou
7: Fell
8: Roaring Meg
9: Keats's ('Meg Merrilees')
10: Thatcher

Name-givers

1: Pavlova
2: Melba
3: Belle Helene
4: Bloody Mary
5: Pompadour
6: Trilby
7: Dolly Varden
8: Rebecca
9: Betty Martin (as in 'It's all my eye and Betty Martin')
10: Fanny Adams

Mothers

1: St Anne
2: Anne of Denmark
3: Marie Louise
4: Whistler's Mother
5: Oedipus's
6: Grendel's

Pretty as Pictures

1: Manet
2: Goya
3: Titian
4: Rembrandt
5: Gainsborough
6: Velasquez
7: Sargent
8: Bronzino
9: Rubens
10: Hockney

Queens

1: Mary of Teck
2: Catherine of Aragon
3: Caroline
4: Philippa
5: Margaret of Anjou and Elizabeth Woodville

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The person appointed will work in the Planning Unit of the Development Corporation but will be jointly responsible to the Director of Commerce and Finance and the Director of Planning, Information and Social Development. He/she will be expected to demonstrate an ability to work without detailed day-to-day supervision and be sufficiently well-motivated and self-confident to see through projects from beginning to end.

For a fuller description and more specific details of the post, please contact John Walker, Tel: Milton Keynes 74000 ext. 383.

Applications QUOTING REFERENCE NS/1355 AND THE JOB TITLE should be sent to the **Personnel Manager, Milton Keynes Development Corporation, Wavendon Tower, Wavendon, Milton Keynes MK17 8LX,** by not later than 11 January 1976.

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PERSONAL Cont. on p. 939

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ADLERIAN SOCIETY. Individual Psychology Today – Report on 13th International Congress, Munich 1976, by Emerich Weissmann MD, leader of the British team. Tuesday 4 Jan. 1977 7.30 p.m. Alliance Hall, Palmer St, SW1. Visitors welcome 30p (stud. 10p).

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COURSES Cont. on p. 939

HAVE A *REALLY* HAPPY NEW YEAR WITH THE
ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
at the
Royal Festival Hall

Tuesday 18th January at 8 pm	**Berlioz**	Overture 'Roman Carnival'
	Chausson	Poème
	Saint-Saëns	Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso
	Beethoven	Symphony No. 7
	Conductor	**Charles Dutoit**
	Soloist	**Kyung-Wha Chung**
Thursday 27th January at 8 pm	**Dvorak**	Serenade for Strings
	Dvorak	Biblical Songs
	Dvorak	Symphony No. 9 (From the New World)
	Conductor	**Antal Dorati**
	Soloist	**Ludmilla Dvorakova**
Sunday 30th January at 3.15 pm	**Dvorak**	Serenade for Strings
	Dvorak	Cello Concerto
	Dvorak	Symphony No. 9 (From the New World)
	Conductor	**Antal Dorati**
	Soloist	**Heinrich Schiff**

Tickets £3.50, £3.00, £2.50, £2.00, £1.50, £1.00 from Box Office, Tel: 928 3191, and usual agents.

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The contributors: **Maurice Ash, Michel Batisse, Mark Braham, Ian Gordon Brown, Tom Burke, Adriano Buzzati-Traverso, Benjamin Creme, Leo Fernig, Françoise and Michel Gauquelin, Stan Gooch, James Hemming, Martin Holgate, Michael Huberman, Pir Vilayat Khan, D.M.A.Leggett, Nancy Wilson Ross, Swami Satchidananda, Alistair Taylor, Colin Ward.**

A limited number of bursaries are available. Write for full details to the Secretary of the Dartington Society, The Elmhirst Centre, Dartington Hall, Totnes, South Devon. Totnes 862224 ext. 45.

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